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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 46,510

Who are history's most loathed politicians

The perils of unpopularity



G2 with European weather

Post-punk novelist Kathy Acker

Leaping the boundaries of sex



Interview G2 pages 12/13

Education

Can New Labour bag the NUS?

G2 pages 10/11

Europe bans British cattle □ Cabinet opts for no new action □ More CJD cases emerge

Ministers defy beef outcry

Children under 'no greater threat'

Patrick Wintour, Owen Bowcott, and Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE Government last night attempted to brasserie out the gathering crisis over beef, rejecting plans to cull cattle herds in the hope that international confidence in the industry will be restored and the Treasury saved from huge compensation claims.

As the Government dug in its heels to defend the farming industry — and the potential for pre-election tax-cuts — Britain was left isolated in Europe on a vote of 14 to one in favour of an immediate and indefinite prohibition on all British cattle imports. John Major last night expressed his "astonishment" at the EU's ban on European Commission president, Jacques Santer, who later said EU officials would meet today to reconsider the evidence.

On the foreign exchanges the impact of the BSE crisis drove down sterling amid a meltdown in domestic consumer confidence, with three more burger chains, including Burger King, announcing they were dropping British beef from their menus. The Government's scientific advisers revealed another two cases of the suspected new strain of CJD.

Plans for a mass cull, supported by the Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, were rejected yesterday at a meeting of a Cabinet committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, warned that the possible dangers of eating beef and beef-derived products. "The Government's advice has done nothing to answer the key consumer concerns about



A deserted Hereford cattle market yesterday morning which would normally be thriving

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUSSELL SACH

restored by the release yesterday of a report from government scientific advisers that children were no more likely to suffer BSE than adults. Ministers also argued that a mass slaughter before the European Union position had been clarified might jeopardise future British claims for EU compensation.

Last night the Consumers' Association accused the Government of failing to reassure the public about the possible dangers of eating beef and beef-derived products. "The Government's advice has done nothing to answer the key consumer concerns about

beef," said director Sheila McKechnie.

Somerfield, Britain's sixth largest supermarket chain, criticised the Government response as "deficient" and called for a selective slaughter of cattle.

The Health Visitors' Association accused the Government of putting its own interests above children's health. In separate statements in the Commons, Mr Hogg and the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, rejected calls for a mass slaughter and said the risks from eating beef were "extremely low". Mr Hogg attacked the EU ban

as unnecessary, but, reflecting the pressure from British beef farmers, appeared to accept he would consider a large-scale slaughter if confidence was not restored in the future.

In bitter Commons exchanges, Mr Dorrell pointed to the judgment, released yesterday, of the Government's own Spongiform Cephalopathy Advisory Committee that "it does not believe the additional measures are justified at this stage".

Mr Dorrell said the committee had repeated its advice that providing present controls were fully implemented

"any BSE-related risk from eating beef or beef products is likely to be extremely small".

He insisted the SRAC findings meant there was no case for a ban on British beef from school menus, and urged the hamburger chains to continue to use British beef.

However, private polls conducted for the McDonald's chain over the weekend show 60 per cent refusal to eat British beef, double the resistance to British eggs during the salmonella scare.

The shadow health secretary, Harriet Harman, faced Tory accusations of "talking down British beef" when she

accused ministers of "reckless disregard for public health" and blamed the "dogma" of deregulation for having swept the country into the crisis.

At the weekend Mr Hogg appeared to open the door to a slaughter of at least 4.5 million cows older than 30 months out of Britain's 11 million-strong herd, but industry critics said the move would be premature, worsen the trade deficit, create a milk drought and possibly force the importation of continental herds also carrying BSE.

Mr Dorrell last night described EU ban on British

Against

- Countries/organisations who have banned British beef:
- 1 France, Germany, Netherlands, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Austria, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden (all European Union countries).
 - 2 Cyprus, United States, Egypt, Singapore, South Africa, Qatar, Australia, Canada, Japan, Russia, New Zealand.
 - 3 Fast food restaurants McDonald's, Wimpy, Burger King, Wendy's.
 - 4 Co-op supermarkets. Several others like Somerfield have promised refunds to customers returning beef products.
 - 5 The Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Lancashire County Council (in schools), Consumers Association.

For

Those claiming that beef is safe:



6 The British government; 13 members of the government's Spongiform Cephalopathy Advisory Committee; Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell.

"There is no basis for anyone to remove beef from their family diet."

On other pages

THE Government yesterday produced tough new measures to fight the panic over mad cow disease. Ministers decided to go back to bed and pull up the covers. See Simon Hoggart's sketch, page 2

Beef crisis, pages 4-5
Comment, letters, page 8
Hugo Young and John Gray, page 9
Roultry prices soar, and City Notebook, page 11



Artificial heart patient dies

Edward Pilkington

AMAN whose doctors claimed he was the first patient in the world to be fitted with a permanent electric heart has died, 30 hours after the battery-powered pump was removed from his body.

Surgeons at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, operated on Abel Goodman on Saturday to take out the device after signs of internal bleeding. The patient's own heart had shown a "remarkable recovery" since the implant five months ago and was considered capable of working alone.

However Mr Goodman, aged 64, died unexpectedly on Sunday night. He suffered a "sudden and unpredictable" change in heart rhythm and could not be resuscitated. He leaves a wife and two children.

Mr Goodman's death is a blow for the hospital, which has been trying to develop an

electronically-powered heart as an alternative to human donor organs, which are in short supply. The device's apparent failure is likely to raise questions about its long-term prospects.

Mr Goodman died four days after a similar mechanical heart was implanted in another man at the John Radcliffe Hospital. The patient, who has not been identified, was described yesterday as "stable and satisfactory".

When Mr Goodman's titanium heart was implanted last October his surgeon, Stephen Westaby, said he could expect a normal life. "There is no reason why he should not be back riding a bike," Mr Westaby said. However, Mr Goodman was plagued by infections, exacerbated by the fact that the rechargeable batteries were in a belt outside his body. He never returned home.

Mr Goodman, a retired film producer, volunteered to try the new procedure, having

Oliver Stone shuns Oscar night to visit Zapatistas

Ian Katz in New York

AS HOLLYWOOD'S chosen few polished their displays of delighted amazement and dignified disappointment yesterday, director Oliver Stone selflessly shunned the Academy Awards ceremony.

"You are great warriors for change and peace," he declared. "Wherever there are human beings in the world we will respect what you are trying to do."

Mr Stone, whose film, Nixon, was nominated for four awards, was not talking about his film-making colleagues. He was referring to the guerrillas of Mexico's Zapatista National Liberation Army, with whom he planned to spend Oscar night.

"You, the Zapatistas, are not little men, you are giants," the director told a group of the guerrillas who welcomed him to the town



Movie-maker meets Mayan rebels

of San Cristóbal de las Casas. "With your presence you have raised the spirits of all of us," Tacho, one of the rebel leaders, replied.

Mr Stone and the talking pig which starred in the Australian film Babe were expected to be the most prominent absentees from last night's ceremony.

The director of Platoon, JFK and Natural Born Killers planned to trek to a remote area in the Chiapas jungle to meet Subcom-

mander Marcos, the Zapatistas' masked, pipe-smoking military leader.

Nixon's nominations include best actor, best supporting actress and best original screenplay but Mr Stone was not shortlisted for his directing and the film flopped commercially.

Mr Stone's entourage of 18 included two scriptwriters, prompting speculation that he may be planning a film on the Zapatistas' 1994 New Year's Day uprising.

Diane Modahl clears her name over drugs ban

Stephen Bierley in Cape Town

THE British athlete Diane Modahl yesterday won a 19-month fight to clear her name of drug taking when the sport's governing body dropped all charges against her.

Modahl, aged 29, spent 2500,000 proving her innocence after being banned for four years in 1994. She tested positive for unusually high levels of the male hormone testosterone in at a meeting in Lisbon.

Yesterday the International Amateur Athletic Federation accepted that there was "grave concern" about the way the drug testing was conducted. Modahl, who is suing the British Athletic Federation for £400,000 damages, said she was "delighted" by the decision, adding: "It has been a costly fight — and not just in financial terms."

Report, page 16

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Inside

Britain
The Marquess of Bristol, a reformed drug addict, is selling paintings and furniture to relieve himself of financial burdens.

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World News

Indian police and negotiators were trying to persuade more than two dozen separatist militants to leave Kashmir's holiest shrine.

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City

The Halifax said it had agreed buy life insurers Clerical Medical for £800 million, thwarting NatWest's earlier bid.

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Sport

Ray Illingworth is expected to step down as England's manager, leaving Lord's to find a new man to shape English cricket.

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Labour left group to resist Blair

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

SIGNS of rank-and-file unease with the direction of Tony Blair's leadership of the Labour Party emerged yesterday, when a new leftwing group of activists — Labour Reform — was established, designed to check centralisation.

The 100-strong group wants to stop the party being so reorganised that it does not have the constitutional power to resist a Blair-led government. The group was born out of the so-called Summer of Discontent last year, when many party activists, including MP's like Richard Burdett, voiced concern at the alleged centralisation of power under Mr Blair.

'Rightwing radicals are constructing a populist model in opposition to the party's traditions'

The avowedly anti-metropolitan group, which includes many Labour councillors, claims the party and the leadership have been drifting apart, and that small groups of rightwing radicals are "constructing a populist plebiscitary model for the party in complete opposition to its traditions".

The group, bound to be dismissed by the leadership as unrepresentative, fear that Mr Blair is trying to build a mass-membership party and then seek endorsement for his changes through referendums of the membership.

In particular, they warn: "In the US, politics has become an affair run by professional politicians to benefit professional politicians. Ordinary people have been reduced to voting fodder."

Labour Reform is also bound to be seen as a weight to Progress, the young activists' network set up by young Blairite radicals, including Derek Draper, the former assistant to Peter Mandelson.

Andy Howell, Labour Reform's chairman, said: "The Blair leadership has no intention of slowing the pace, this creates a need for Labour Reform to influence change."

sire to see an active party, which is engaged in policy consultation with its own members and the political education of the electorate.

"We see ourselves as the best hope for unity between party and government in office and the best insurance against a Labour government being blown off course by the London-based establishment."

He said it was ironic that, despite information technology, the mass membership of the Labour party were consulted less and informed less about party policy.

The first four studies to be undertaken by Labour Reform are:

□ A review of the constitutional base of the National Policy Forum and of methods of regeneration of constituency parties. They fear that local parties are becoming little more than social and fundraising organisations.

□ Reform of the National Executive Committee, to ensure that it remains responsive to the party membership in the country and supportive of a Labour government. The party leadership is already considering a radical restructuring of the NEC when Labour is in government.

□ Support for a positive role for local government in the party.

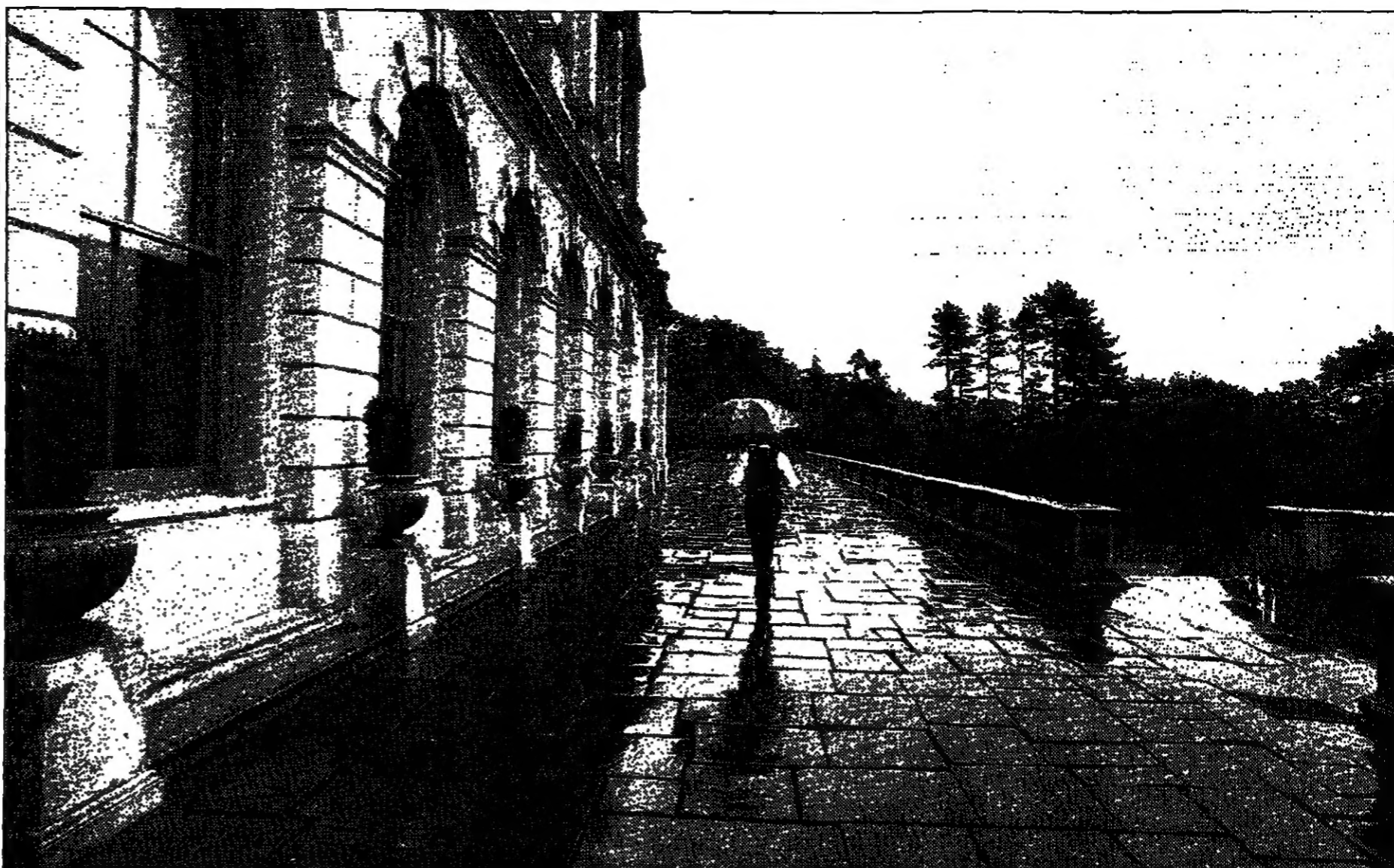
□ The creation of an open debate on constitutional reform within the party, in which Labour Reform will insist that the party must not drift into becoming a supporters' club, rather than a full participative party.

Leaders of Labour Reform insist they are not inspired by animosity towards Mr Blair, or drawn from either the extreme left or right of the party. The group accepts that Labour cannot go back to the era of cloth caps and name-filled rooms.

But they complain in the group's first newsletter that Labour is "becoming trapped in a sterile debate between traditionalists and modernisers. The options for the party are polarised between standing still or adopting the agenda of a London-based elite".

They claim many party members would prefer to avoid another bout of internal reform before the election. But they complain in the newsletter that the Blair leadership has no intention of slowing the pace, this creates a need for Labour Reform to influence change.

Cliveden may be haunted by scandal, but its Stock Exchange flotation is put at £30m



William Winde's arched terrace of 1850 at Cliveden, with the Borghese balustrade which the first Viscount Astor bought in Rome in 1896

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Cashing in on betrayal and bootleg sex

Where Hitler's henchman was feted, and the war minister dallied with a call-girl

John Ezard on a stately manoeuvre



Ghosts of Cliveden (from left): Oswald Moseley, John Profumo, Christine Keeler

CLIVEDEN, full of the notorious ghosts of the 1930s Cliveden Set and the 1960s Profumo scandal, is to be floated on the Stock Exchange for £30 million.

Announcing this yesterday, the company which now runs the miniature stately home near Taplow, Buckinghamshire, as a luxury hotel boasted that its room rates of £245 a night were the highest in Britain.

Cliveden plc, which claimed the property was one of the world's three top hotels, said it would use the cash to develop a chain of

other luxury hotels. To boost the flotation, the company issued a 32-page glossy brochure which stresses Cliveden's four servants per room, 375 acres of grounds and swimming pool. But it only briefly mentions the Profumo scandal and omits the 1930s connection.

"There are so many ways of relaxing at Cliveden", the brochure says, in a claim which historians of the house would endorse.

You could flirt with betraying your country, as did the Cliveden Set under the then owner, Lord Astor.

in its upstairs support for appeasing Hitler's conquest of Europe. Hitler's confidant and London ambassador, von Ribbentrop, was a favoured pre-war guest at Cliveden, as was the British

fascist leader Oswald Moseley. An historian of the Times, which was also involved in appeasement, has written: "The Cliveden Set carry a heavy responsibility in the long eye of his

tory". Or, at Cliveden, you could relax by sleeping with a girl who was also sleeping with the Soviet naval attaché, as did Britain's then Minister for War, John Profumo, in July 1961.

Mr Profumo subsequently spent 30 years as a poverty fund-raiser rehabilitating himself after the scandal, which helped to bring down the Conservative government in 1964.

The girl, Christine Keeler, who was naked beside the pool when she met Profumo and Lord Astor, later wrote: "It was embarrassing to be formally introduced to ladies in tiaras and evening dresses".

Or you could — as did Cliveden's 17th century founder, the Duke of Buckingham — use it to enter-

tain your mistress and fellow-visiters. "He had all the pleasures of the flesh and chase in mind", the brochure admits. Cliveden's 20th century dynast, the US millionaire landlord Waldorf Astor, started in the way he meant his successors to go on by building a colossal voluptuous fountain of love in front of the house.

For their huge expenditure, today's guests get another touch of nostalgia. In the men's loo, they can find portraits of Ms Keeler, her companion Mandy Rice-Davies, and nearby, for no clear reason, a picture of the Duke of Edinburgh. On a table beside these is a bottle of mouth wash, put there to symbolise Cliveden's place in the history of Britain.

Spheres of influence

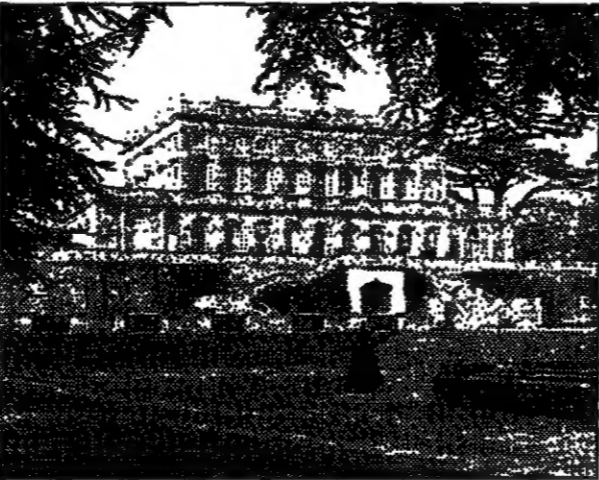
Campaign Group
The Campaign Group of Socialist MPs is around 30 strong, but has an outside network and a monthly newspaper which can legitimately claim it has enough influence to help hard-left MPs such as Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbott win election to the National Executive Committee. The role of Campaign Group MPs, including some of its brighter advocates such as Alan Simpson and Ken Livingstone, will increase in the event of Labour winning only a small majority at the next election.

Labour Co-ordinating Committee
A supporter of Bennite democratic reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the LCC transformed itself into a supportive if independent voice backing Neil Kinnock's reforms. Many of its leading figures are now professional lobbyists or researchers and it relies heavily on a quarterly journal, *Renewal*, for its present intellectual influence.

Labour Briefing
Scurrilous, sometimes funny, very hard-left magazine supported by Liz Davies, the Labour candidate for Leeds North East banned from standing by the National Executive. The magazine has Trotskyist links, but insists that it is not an entryist organisation.

Progress
Newly-formed magazine cum political education centre, designed to provide mainly young Blairites with the intellectual ammunition and information to make New Labour a reality on the ground. However, it insists that it has not been established as a factional group aimed at the winning of power for its supporters.

Labour First
Union-orientated right-of-centre group with heavy reliance on the support of the electricians' union and of the engineers for its influence. Organises strenuously for NEC elections.



Cliveden... 'one of the world's top three hotels'

Robin Hood on run from PR men

Martin Wainwright

THE Sheriff of Nottingham is riding to the rescue of his old antagonist Robin Hood, after an attempt by business and PR executives to dump the man who gave taxation a warm and friendly image.

Companies and expert specialists in the Midlands city are hoping to out the green-jerked bowman as their civic symbol, on the grounds that he gives the wrong impression to potential, money-minded investors.

ship — comprising businessmen, the city's two universities and the local council — has decided that Robin is "soft imaging" and a PR light-weight, for all the havoc attributed to his stave and longbow.

"We have to find a way of promoting what we have to offer, to attract wealth-generating activity in competition with all the other UK and European regions," said Alistair Eperon, director of corporate affairs at Boots, the city's biggest firm.

He added: "Nottingham has on offer a lot of very good things, but none of them has

much to do with Robin Hood — that is the problem."

Bob White, the city council's director of corporate affairs, said that Robin was a difficult symbol to adapt to 21st century Europe.

The partnership, which is backing its claim with research and surveys, hopes for a new symbol by August. The delay is offering time for a fightback, led by the current Sheriff of Nottingham, Roy Greensmith.

He said yesterday: "The legend of Robin Hood is of a person with a soul and a civic conscience, a man who robbed the rich to give to the

poor. That is rather out of fashion these days. But can we really afford to give him up? I don't think so — not just for tourism but for business."

The move also brought an immediate bid for Robin from Pontefract, where the author Brian Lewis has fought a long campaign to restore the outlaw to his more likely stamping ground of South Yorkshire. "At last, Nottingham has given up its long fantasy," he said. "We look forward to welcoming Robin back to where he really belongs."

Leader comment, page 8

She admits she is attracted to feminine men and masculine women. "The type of girl I fancy when I walk into a room is not the type of girl I sleep with. Isn't that weird? I'm a lazy thing and I usually sleep with people who approach me."

Kathy Acker G2 page 12

Bill

bi.roe@europeonline.com

Stress monger

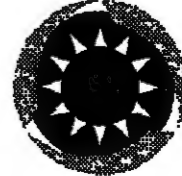
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Schools, shoppers and restaurants spurn suspect meat as job worries mount and Government ignores safety demands

'Buy non-British' stampede grows

Owen Bowcott and Vivek Chaudhary

THE stampede to drop British beef from school, retail and restaurant menus accelerated yesterday as the Government stepped back from public calls for specific guidelines on food safety.

Three more fast food restaurant chains — Burger King, Wimpy and Wendy — yesterday cited customer confidence in their decisions to abandon British beef, while prices at cattle auctions plunged nearly 40 per cent.

With the Government taking a defence line based on the principle of consumer choice, markets and retail outlets were being driven by commercial fears about consumer anxieties.

"Wimpy is moving away

from British beef for its burgers and changing to non-British beef," a company spokesman said last night.

"Wimpy believes it must change to non-British beef to maintain absolute confidence in the safety of its products."

Likewise Wendy, following McDonald's at the weekend, promised: "From today all beef in our restaurants in the UK will be non-British beef, and all British beef will be removed from our system."

Meanwhile the Consumers' Association last night reiterated its warning that the only way to avoid the risk of BSE-infected meat was to stop eating beef, and launched a fierce attack on the handling of the crisis. "The Government's advice has done nothing to answer the key consumer concerns about beef," said Sheila McKechnie, the association's director. "The main question for the

consumer is whether to eat beef or not. That question still remains. The Government's advice rests on enforcement of new controls in slaughterhouses. The evidence of the past has shown this has not happened."

For schools, Mr Dorrell's decision not to issue fresh regulations left the choice up to individual education authorities. Estimates suggest a third of them have already taken beef off the menu.

Doug McAvo, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the minister's statement would leave LEAs and teachers waiting for a lead. "If there is an unquantifiable risk, it is nonetheless a risk. Schools should take beef off their menus for children."

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers,

also urged schools to drop beef. "The scientific evidence is that the risk is small, but there is still a risk."

"I think Mr Dorrell should have advised schools against serving beef to children, until the concern has been allayed."

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities' education officer, John Fowler, supported his call: "I would imagine most parents would want to see schools keeping beef off menus for their children. This is a failure of leadership."

But Ian Langtry, of the Association of County Councils, disagreed. "Beeburgers and sausages are already off the menus in most schools. Most too give a range of options which include a vegetarian meal. I am not surprised the Government has concluded there is no need to offer generalised advice."

The Ministry of Defence

last night confirmed that it, too, would attempt to provide troops with non-beef options. "We have no guidelines," a spokesman explained, "but where possible, where beef is on the menu, we aim to provide a choice so people can exercise discretion. A lot of our beef comes from Argentina. It's a very good price."

In cattle and meat markets, meanwhile, prices for British beef plunged as BSE fears turned the traditional Sunday roast into the pariah of the nation's dinner tables.

Livestock auctioneers said prices for heifers — young females, and normally the most valuable cattle — were 37 per cent below those paid before the scare began last week.

The estimate was based on a virtually non-existent market since most farmers are holding back their cattle in the hope prices recover. Traders at London's Smithfield

meat market said the price of imported beef had rocketed 25 per cent as sales of home-grown beef ground to a virtual halt. "People aren't buying beef for love or money," one meat-cutter said.

Michael Chapman, head of Guttridge and Co meat wholesalers, added: "We just can't sell British beef at the moment. It's come to an almost complete standstill. It's worse than we expected."

Paul Ashworth, secretary for beef specialist Channel Meats Ltd, said he had sold around 25,000 tonnes of beef, mainly to Chinese restaurants. But this was almost half what he sold last Monday. "The fear is that many of us are going to be unemployed in a month — people are very upset," he said.

£1.5bn widening in trade gap feared as imports replace exports

Larry Elliott Economics Editor

THE CITY was last night predicting an increase of up to £1.5 billion a year in the trade gap following Europe's ban on beef exports.

Analysis said that exports of £300 million a year could be wiped out by the international reaction to the scare and retailers were likely to switch to imported beef.

With the financial markets still jittery about the prospect of a partial or complete cull, they added that trade might merely be the first part of the economy to suffer.

Economists were still not ruling out the possibility that the Government would eventually have to order the slaughter of all 11 million beef and dairy cattle. They said this "nightmare scenario" would slash growth, push up inflation, possibly force the introduction of milk rationing, and might eliminate at least the impact of tax cuts in the November Budget.

The most obvious impact would be on the public finances, where the cost of compensating farmers alone would be £10 billion, according to Ian Shepherdson, economist with City firm HSBC.

The Government is hoping that Brussels will use the Common Agricultural Policy to provide an alternative market for unwanted British beef to limit the impact on state finances.

The Government will probably have to foot the bill for subsidies to help farmers rebuild their businesses and for the long-term costs of unemployment in the food processing and dairy industries.

Mr Shepherdson said that the total costs could add up to a maximum of £20 billion on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, perhaps spread over a number of years.

Some of the money would come from a raid on the Treasury's contingency reserve, but according to Adam Cole, economist with James Capel, government borrowing would inevitably rise as well.

The PSBR in the current financial year already looks set to exceed £30 billion, and the City was already having

doubts about the Chancellor's ability to deliver big pre-election tax cuts even before last week's revelations about BSE.

Killing every head of cattle would also magnify the impact of last night's ban, since it would mean importing vast quantities of dairy products.

Allowing for the loss of all exports of milk and dairy products and assuming a one-for-one switch to imports, the trade deficit would swell by a further £5 billion. The Government's current forecast for 1996 is £5 billion.

In the short term, the inflation outlook will be improved by the collapse in beef prices. Beef accounts for 0.6 per cent

Child clue to killer strain

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

SOME of the victims of the new strain of fatal brain disorder, which may be a human version of mad cow disease were under 10 when they were infected, John Pattison, chairman of the government's expert panel said yesterday.

Revealing the ages of the 10 victims for the first time, Professor Pattison said the youngest was 18 at the time of death. The others were aged 19, 20, three were 29, two were 30, one was 31 and the last 41.

The assumption must be that the incubation period was 10 years and the victims had been infected in the mid-1980s. This coincided with the time the bovine form of the disease showed itself.

He also said that two other suspected cases of young people with the disease were being studied by the committee. Both were seriously ill. Confirmation that the disease was the same was not possible until after death.

He said it was the extreme youth of the victims at the time of infection which led the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee to consider whether children



A truck containing carcasses of cows, slaughtered after one of the herd was diagnosed with BSE, leaving a farm in Pommerville-Vicomte, western France, yesterday. The carcasses of 151 cows are due to be burned today. Five days ago, France banned British beef imports because of BSE. PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE HUGUES

might be particularly at risk. The normal form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease generally affected people over 50.

The two-day meeting considered whether the proteins associated with causing the disease were more likely to be absorbed by or affect children more than adults. At the end of exhaustive evidence the answer was "no".

Professor Pattison said that

the advice to Government remained the same as the previous week. It was unclear why no cases of the previously unrecognised variant had not been found in older patients but that did not mean that younger people were more susceptible. It could mean that the dietary habits of older people were different or that the disease had been passed off as dementia.

In contrast to the more robust statements of the two ministers at the press conference, the professor continued to be cautious. He said that a large number of tests were being carried out and it would be weeks and sometimes months before all the results were available.

The most likely cause of the new human form of CJD was eating beef but there was still

no proof. Other explanations had not stood scrutiny.

Asked about whether milk and dairy products were safe, Professor Pattison said there was no evidence that there could be a route of infection.

He was not so sure about beef. Since muscle contained the agent, it was possible that animal blood and offal should not be put on fields where animals would graze.

mission through beef than it was probably through splash- ing of offal on to meat in the slaughtering process. The committee wanted the most stringent measures to make sure that offal was removed.

The committee also wanted the Government to ensure that fertilizer derived from animal blood and offal should not be put on fields where animals would graze.

Advisers confirm that CJD cases linked to BSE before offal ban

THE following is the statement from the Government's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee:

Introduction

The committee has reported 10 cases of a previously unrecognised variant of CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease).

It agreed this weekend, after further discussion and consideration of additional genetic data from some of these patients, that our con-

clusions of March 20, 1996 are unchanged. That is, on current data and in the absence of any credible alternative, the most likely explanation at present is that these cases are linked to exposure to BSE before the introduction of the SBO (specified bovine offal) ban in 1988. It emphasises that there are only 10 cases to date, and that it is not in a position to confirm whether or not there is a causal link between BSE and the human disease.

Risk assessment

The committee has considered whether a quantitative risk assessment can provide an estimate of the absolute risk in relation to BSE. In its judgment a precise measure is impossible because of a number of interacting uncertainties, including:

- the magnitude of the species barrier between cattle and man;
- lack of data on levels of infectivity in a range of important cattle tissues which are below the level of detectability by current assays;
- the uneven distribution of infectivity in any tissue;
- the time course for the appearance of infectivity over the duration of the incubation period;
- whether there is a dose below which there is no risk of infection.

It therefore made assessments on the basis of the

available quantitative data, and where these were lacking on expert opinion and its own collective judgment.

Age-related susceptibility

SEAC had a wide ranging discussion of the changes in the physiology of the human gastro-intestinal tract and host defences throughout life. It considered carefully its knowledge of the transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (kuru, CJD, scrapie, transmissible mink encephalopathy; BSE) in natural infections and animal model systems. If the new variant of CJD is related to exposure to BSE, this exposure is likely to have been between 1982 and late 1988, and the age range of the cases does not suggest that those who were children at the time were at any greater risk than young adults. Taking all the above

into account it concludes that if human infection with the BSE agent occurs, infants and children are not likely to be more susceptible to that infection than are adults.

Other vulnerable groups

The committee also considered the following groups: the immunosuppressed, patients in hospital and pregnant women. It concludes that if human infection with the BSE agent occurs, none of these groups is likely to have any increased susceptibility to infection.

Public, the younger generation, and parental concerns

No human activity is without some risk; if the Government rigorously enforces the current and newly recommended controls, we believe this risk is likely to be extremely small; however the

committee recognises that parents will often choose to reduce risk to their children beyond that which they are prepared to accept for themselves. It is important to be aware that many foods are associated with health risks, and that changing from beef to non-beef products is not necessarily without risk.

Trimmings from cattle over 30 months of age

The committee reaffirmed its recommendation that cattle aged over 30 months must be deboned in licensed plants, and went on to recommend that the trimmings, comprising the obvious nervous and lymphatic tissue (including the 14 lymph nodes specified in EC trade legislation) and the vertebral column (excluding tail vertebrae) should be treated as specified bovine offal.

It also recommended that

the whole head of animals aged over six months, except for the tongue (provided that it is removed without contamination), should be treated as specified bovine offal.

Gelatin

It concluded that this material was safe... given the large reduction in theoretical infectivity in the production of gelatin.

Meat and bone meal

The committee confirmed its previous advice that the use of mammalian meat and bone meal should be prohibited in any circumstances where there might be a risk of the material being fed to or ingested by ruminants. In particular, it must not be incorporated into any feed for any farmed animals, including fish or horses, or into fertiliser likely to be used on

land to which ruminants have access.

Conclusions

The committee therefore advises the Government:

- to ensure that all the restrictions previously recommended are fully implemented. If this is ensured, any BSE-related risk from eating any beef or beef products is likely to be extremely small;
- to reinforce immediately the surveillance of CJD and associated epidemiological research;
- that these issues will require long-term, basic and applied research [which] will require substantial additional resources. There should be no delays due to difficulties in obtaining resources.

The committee does not believe that additional measures are justified, but the situation needs to be kept under careful review.

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UK isolated, friendless and without offer of aid

Stephen Bates on EU scientists' vote to ban all tainted products indefinitely

BRTAIN found itself isolated within the European Union over beef last night, friendless and with no immediate promise of cash aid to bail it out of the worst crisis in British agriculture since the second world war.

The senior veterinary officials of the 15 member states voted 14 to one for an immediate ban on the export of all beef products — including semen and by-products used in the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries — for an indefinite period until Britain satisfies the EU that they are safe.

The Government has been invited for more talks with the commission, which is responsible for implementing the ban and was essentially

the driving force behind its adoption.

Last night it was clear the commission used to years of slights and insults from the British for its bureaucracy and its allegedly overweening powers — was in no mood to accept any compromises or half measures and was not prepared to offer aid.

Officials in Brussels made clear yesterday that the commission's emergency aid budget for farmers is already allocated for this year and next.

Franz Fischer, the Aus-

trian agriculture commissioner, wrote to Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, on Friday asking why the commission had not been informed at last Monday's meeting of agriculture ministers, of the pending announcement about beef safety.

"I would have expected you to consult us before taking such a decision... If the new findings are as troubling as they sound, the measures you announced seem insufficient."

At last night's press confer-

ence, the commissioner was furious when asked by a British journalist whether he thought the British had acted sufficiently. "It is a very serious issue," he said. "We must all realise we are dealing with an extremely serious problem. It was only to be expected that member states should react in this way."

Veterinary officials leaving the scientific committee said there had been strong feelings against Britain, and diplomats from other member states have been equally un-

sympathetic. The British claimed that the EU ban was political rather than scientific.

Keith Meldrum, Britain's chief vet, said it had been "rushed, unscientific and disproportionate". Even Denmark, which had not banned beef — partly because of Britain's support in an earlier Danish foot and mouth crisis — will fall into line.

Britain, so pleased to stand out from the herd on political grounds, has found Europe now holds the whip hand.

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It would be interesting to ask Mrs Major if she hears any terrified three-in-the-morning screams coming from beside her. If the Conservatives did go down to two seats, Mr Major, in Huntingdon, would probably hold one of the two, perhaps along with Sir Norman Fowler in Sutton Coldfield, but neither of them might find the Commons much fun in those circumstances.

Matthew Engel G2 Front

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Chance to opt out may appeal to Eurosceptics

EU warns Britain not to block unity

John Palmer

A POWERFUL coalition of governments — led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac — will warn John Major this week not to derail plans for closer European unity or risk being excluded from a final agreement.

When he meets his fellow EU leaders in Turin, northern Italy, on Friday, the Prime Minister will be told that any chance of a compromise agreement before Britain's general election will depend on his accepting that countries wishing to forge a closer union should be free to do so.

Under the proposed compromise to be put to the Maastricht treaty review conference, Britain will not be obliged to take part in any new security or defence union, but must not block other countries which want to go ahead.

If the Government rejects the compromise, the other EU leaders are expected to postpone a new treaty until after the general election.

Buoyed by his coalition's success in the weekend elections in three German regions, Mr Kohl is determined that the Maastricht treaty review should match the 1993 single currency timetable with parallel steps to strengthen political unity.

Meanwhile Mr Chirac yesterday confidently restated France's determination to join, on time, the single currency bloc.

The suggested compromise could appeal to some Eurosceptic Tory MPs and would allow Mr Major to claim he had secured more "opt-outs" than those for the single currency and social policy secured as part of the Maastricht treaty in 1991.

But government ministers fear that the emergence of a "federalising hard core" within the EU will further marginalise Britain's influence in Europe.

The Italian government, which currently holds the EU presidency and will host the Turin summit, has been left in no doubt about the strength of feeling on these issues in Bonn, Paris and other capitals.

"Everyone would prefer an agreement involving all 15 member states in every aspect of future integration. But if this is not possible for one country, then at the very least that country must not frustrate the wishes of the majority who want to act on their own," a senior Italian government source said yesterday.

But, like every other EU government, has the right to veto any aspect of the proposed overhaul of the Maastricht treaty, including greater majority voting or an eventual defence union.

But, a German diplomat said: "The British cannot have it both ways. They cannot single-handedly stop the EU as a whole moving forward and at the same time block moves by others to cooperate more closely without Britain."

The French and German governments point out that monetary union provides a precedent for a "variable geometry" agreement on closer integration.

Although Britain has an opt-out from EMU, the other countries will be able to use the EU institutions and legal system to run the single currency bloc.

The idea is that this model might be applied to internal justice, immigration, security and defence. Countries which decide to opt out could rejoin the hard core at any stage in the future.

If Mr Major signals opposition to the idea at Turin, or later during the inter-governmental conference, the other leaders will have to sit out the negotiations until a general election produces a new government in Britain.

But they fear that a protracted delay in the timetable for a new treaty could damage plans to enlarge the EU.



Red-carpet treatment... King Harald of Norway looks on as President Yeltsin blows a kiss to the crowds on his arrival in Oslo yesterday. Russian opposition to Nato expansion and Norway's concerns about nuclear pollution will top the agenda for talks during his visit. PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEI CHIRKOV

Yeltsin rules out merger with Belarus

David Hearst in Moscow and John Palmer in Brussels

BORIS Yeltsin was forced to backpedal furiously yesterday on his plans to seek the reintegration of former Soviet states with Russia. The Russian president denied that a union treaty with Belarus, to be signed on April 2, would mean the merger of the two countries.

Mr Yeltsin said: "Somebody has got things mixed up." He was speaking after 30,000 Belarusians opposed to any merger demonstrated in the capital, Minsk, on Sunday.

Russia's cold feet derive from the knowledge that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — the other states involved in Mr Yeltsin's original plan for an embryonic union of four states — are now interested in no more than a concept of "deeper co-operation".

The central Asian states are not prepared to sign an agreement giving powers to a supra-national supreme council composed of presidents, prime ministers and parliamentary Speakers.

But Alexander Lukashenko, the despotic president of Belarus who is in permanent conflict with his

from his project to gain the votes of moderate Russian nationalists who deplore his role in breaking up the Soviet Union in 1991. The other two signatories of the secret agreement which heralded the collapse of the union, Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislav Shushkevich — the then leaders of Ukraine and Belarus

Mikhail Gorbachev, the then Soviet president, instead. Mr Yeltsin has never forgiven Mr Nazarbayev for what he sees as an act of betrayal, and now views him as a potential ally of the communist leader, Genady Zyuganov.

In reply to Mr Yeltsin's effort to court the nationalist vote, Mr Zyuganov has been

states, the Duma declined to continue the squabble.

Mr Zyuganov is favoured to win the June presidential elections. The support of the extreme left will boost his 23 per cent share of the vote by six to seven points — at the expense of the "third force" of moderates, whom Mr Yeltsin has been wooing.

The European Union signed a trade agreement with Belarus yesterday, after receiving assurances from Mikhail Chiriz, the prime minister, that his country was not about to merge with Russia. "Russia was, is and will be Belarus's main foreign partner," Mr Chiriz said. "Contacts between Belarus and the European Union are in parallel and will be co-ordinated with the Russian Federation and the subsequent sanctions imposed on the country, has been literally put back by at least 50 years," said the survey.

'Russia was, is and will be Belarus's main foreign partner. Contacts with Europe will be co-ordinated with Russia'

parliament is ready to sign up. On Saturday he spoke in enthusiastic terms of composing a national anthem for the new state. He said the union agreement must be signed in a public square or "in a solemn ceremony in a palace" before the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Alexei II.

President Yeltsin has reaped scant political reward — have both been ousted. Mr Yeltsin has struggled to disown his role in the meeting. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan, is in no hurry to bail Mr Yeltsin out. Mr Nazarbayev was invited to attend the secret conclave in 1991, but his aircraft mysteriously developed technical difficulties in Moscow, and the Kazakh leader saw

forced to seek new partners for a leftwing alliance. He has found them on the extreme left, an alliance which led to his party signing two largely symbolic Duma resolutions to restore the status quo ante of the Soviet Union. When challenged by Mr Yeltsin to say whether the resolutions invalidated Russia's recognition of the newly independent

Wooded Chirac articulates rising passion for Europe

France's leader has thrust social policy back on to the agenda of this week's Maastricht review conference, writes Alex Duval Smith in Paris in the second of a series of views from EU states



BY DIVERTING the European agenda towards social affairs, President Jacques Chirac yesterday put paid to any lingering British hopes that the arrival of a tricolore-waving Gaullist at the Elysee Palace would dampen France's Euroardour.

Outlining his vision ahead of this week's inter-governmental conference (IGC) in Turin, President Chirac appeared in the throes of Euro-passion, allowing him to gift-wrap a few thorny domestic issues such as unemployment and poverty — and hand them to Brussels.

Mr Chirac implied in an article in Liberation that Britain's bid to the Maastricht social chapter did not go far enough and was too often flouted. He wants to "define a genuine European social project", and will shortly circulate his proposals to member states.

The French president confirmed that his country will be on board when the single currency is launched on January 1, 1999 — with a tangible euro in consumer's hands in 2002 and called for penalties to be imposed against countries which carry out competitive devaluations.

Mr Chirac knows as well as anyone that the Turin conference was never intended to be a forum for discussing the single currency, or the transfer of a member's social conscience. It is due to address far more superficial issues, such as reforming European institutions, improving common foreign and security policy and increasing judicial and police co-operation.

Yesterday, however, he became the European Union's "18 million unemployed, its 50 million threatened by poverty, the families affected by drugs".

He said: "We have managed

to create a free trade in goods, services and people. We have installed a Common Agricultural Policy which recognises the pre-eminence of our farmers. But have we reassured the Europeans?"

Sceptics could argue that Mr Chirac wants to bog down the Turin agenda with difficult social issues. But that would be unlikely.

President Chirac is proving that he is a Euro-waverer who has been wooed. In 1992, he hesitated until the last over whether to back Maastricht. During his election campaign last year, he never mentioned Europe.

But six nuclear tests later, and after proving his mettle as a leader by spearheading European intervention in Bosnia, Mr Chirac has found in Europe an unlikely area of national consensus. The Socialists are broadly in agreement and the leftwing Liberation said in a leader article yesterday: "European construction is to France what the law of gravity is to the apple — unquestionable and a categorical imperative."

Michel Rocard, the former Socialist prime minister, told the Guardian: "Europe is safe in Chirac's hands. He is moving in the right direction. The problem is Britain. The community should ask itself how much longer it should put up with a member which is such an extent hinders progress."

Even Eurosceptics in the rightwing majority — led by the National Assembly's president, Philippe Seguin — have muted their criticism.

Next: Scandinavia

Only public opinion has its doubts: the latest opinion poll, published last Friday, found that 49 per cent of French people consider European countries "too far apart" to be merged. But the same poll found 36 per cent wish it to proceed apace.

With France enduring 11.6 per cent unemployment, and single currency criteria standing in the way of economic measures to reverse the trend, it is natural that President Chirac should turn to Europe.

Mr Chirac said yesterday: "The community has a budget of 600 billion francs (93.5 billion) — a marvellous instrument for job creation." He said it was unacceptable that job-creation schemes agreed at EU summits in 1994 and 1996, including 14 transport projects, were still dormant.

Turning to the IGC's main mission — to adapt institutions to the EU's enlargement to 27 countries — President Chirac said France's principles were "identity, efficiency, democracy and enlargement".

But in a stark contrast to Thatcherite arguments for enlargement to dilute the EU, he said that Europe must be strengthened before admitting new members.

Let us be faithful to the lessons of General de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou: to be able to enlarge, Europe must first deepen while respecting national sovereignty."

He reassured France's proposal, backed by Britain, for a foreign policy representative to be appointed to give the 15 member states "one face and one voice". His favoured candidate is known to be the former rightwing president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

Mr Chirac also proposed reducing the number of European commissioners and allowing the heads of national parliaments to be consulted on the Commission's work.

He implicitly accepted the extension of qualified majority voting to the Council of Europe, stressing that member states which wish to "should be able, between them, to develop co-operative projects".

But he steered clear of stating that qualified majority voting should extend to defence and foreign policy co-ordination. France, like Britain, does not believe majority voting can be used in these areas.

About 20 senior figures in Poland's small Jewish community had been hastily assembled to meet the Queen.

It was a late addition to her schedule on the long-planned state visit, after some British Jews complained that she was not scheduled to visit Auschwitz.

The visit has attracted considerable and rather respectful interest in the Polish press, but the Queen and Prince Philip have drawn only modest crowds. About 1,000 people came to see her on the first walkabout in Warsaw's old Town Square.

In a speech to the Polish parliament today she is expected to stress Britain's support for expansion of the European Union and Nato. Warsaw wants full and fast membership of the Western institutions.

World news in brief



First Lady in Bosnia... Hillary Clinton greets US peacekeepers on her arrival at Tuzla airbase yesterday, during her one-day visit to the troops in Bosnia. Accompanied by her daughter Chelsea, she flew in on a cargo plane loaded with presents, and became the first US president's wife to visit independently an area of conflict. PHOTOGRAPH: DOUG MILLS

Queen pays tribute to Polish Jews

THE Queen laid a wreath yesterday at Umschlagplatz, just outside what was the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw, as she began the first visit by a British monarch to Poland, writes Sanchia Berg in Warsaw.

A monument in black and white stone marks the spot where 300,000 Jews were forced into cattle-trucks to be sent to the death camp at Treblinka.

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Arms trade ethics call

A judicial inquiry has recommended an end to all secrecy surrounding South African arms sales as part of a new weapons policy subordinating economic advantage to ethical considerations, writes David Beresford in Johannesburg.

In an 85-page report released yesterday, the commission under Judge Edwin Cameron urged the government to limit all weapons sales and recommended controls including a code of conduct to ensure weapons do not reach "repressive, or aggressive regimes".

Muskie critical

The former US secretary of state, Edmund Muskie, is in a critical condition after suffering a heart attack, his law firm said yesterday. Mr Muskie, aged 81, a former presidential candidate, suffered the attack during an operation in Washington. — Reuter.

Murdoch in China

Rupert Murdoch's Star TV network yesterday announced a new three-channel satellite-delivered service in the Chinese language of Mandarin. — Reuter.

Samper defiant

Columbia's president, Ernesto Samper, has rejected any notion of resigning despite having proposed early elections to help the country overcome a

Diplomat expelled

Jordan has expelled Hussein Faraj Khalaf, the assistant press attaché at the Iraqi embassy in Amman, for activities incompatible with his diplomatic status, an official source said yesterday. — Reuter.

Giscard resigns

France's right faces its biggest shake-up for 20 years after the resignation last night of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as leader of the Union for French Democracy (UDF), writes Alex Duval Smith in Paris.

Heard at last

Deaf Swedes can now report crimes to deaf staff at the country's first police station for the hard of hearing in a Stockholm suburb. "Many crimes against deaf people go unreported because of communication problems," Bilger Ulug, a police spokeswoman, said. — Reuter.

WHO says sanctions have devastated Iraq health care

THE World Health Organisation said yesterday that five years of sanctions have set back health care in Iraq by 50 years and the international community should reconsider the implications of the financial and trade embargo.

In a survey of the effects of sanctions on health, the United Nations agency said most Iraqis had been on a semi-starvation diet since the Gulf war in 1991. Since sanctions were imposed in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, infant mortality has doubled

and the death rate for children under five is at least six times higher.

"Assessment reports rightly remarked that the quality of health care in Iraq, due to the six-week 1991 war and the subsequent sanctions imposed on the country, has been literally put back by at least 50 years," said the survey.

"Diseases such as malaria, typhoid and cholera, which were once almost under control, have rebounded since 1991 to epidemic levels, with the health sector as a helpless witness," it added. — Reuter.

Pope denies cancer report

THE Vatican yesterday denied a Spanish newspaper report that the Pope has cancer and said the pontiff, aged 75, would go ahead with a heavy schedule of engagements in the next few weeks.

Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the chief Vatican spokesman, said the Pope had laughed when he heard about the report in the newspaper Diario 16, which said on Sunday he probably had cancer of the colon.

"His Holiness's doctor authorises me to say that John Paul II undergoes regular clinical checks and that he does not show any sign whatsoever of a neoplastic disease," Mr Navarro-Valls said.

The Pope underwent surgery in 1992 to remove a tumour from his colon that doctors said was starting to turn malignant. The Vatican says the tumour was completely removed. — Reuter.

'Gallic Elvis' Hallyday weds

The French rock singer, Johnny Hallyday, aged 52, married model Laetitia Beaudou, aged 31, yesterday. It was his fifth wedding and her first.

The couple tied the knot at the town hall in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a chic suburb of Paris. "We love him all the same," said a teenage girl, one of dozens of well-wishers outside.

"In a lifestyle as difficult as ours, the entertainment world, it's hard for couples to stay together," the singer's manager, Jean-Claude Camus, said. "But he's found someone people unanimously admire."

A phenomenon little known outside the French-speaking world where he is feted as the Gallic answer to Elvis Presley, "Johnny" has enjoyed huge success since his first hit in the 1960s. — Reuter.

Berlusconi claims rivals are 'dinosaurs' as Italy shuts up shop to protest at high taxes

John Hooper in Rome

SHOPS and bars across Italy closed their shutters for two hours yesterday to protest against the tax burden carried by small businesses.

Tax has become a key issue in the general election campaign and was the central theme yesterday of the first televised debate between the two main contenders for the premiership, allowing Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the right, to coin the campaign's first memorable slogan.

He accused his rival, Professor Romano Prodi, and other centre-left leaders of representing the "Jurassic Park of the First Republic",

Several prominent figures from the past, including a former Christian Democrat prime minister, Ciriaco De Mita, have been put up as candidates of the centre-left's "Olive Tree alliance".

As a result, the Olive Tree is vulnerable to charges that it has inherited a tradition of high-spending, high-taxing government.

Mr Berlusconi and his formerly neo-fascist allies are standing on a platform of tax cuts, which the centre-left has dismissed as cheap populism. There is no doubting public pressure for lower — and simpler — taxation. Official figures suggest salaried workers pay an average 43.2 per cent of their income in taxes and

the self-employed an average 40.4 per cent.

The chairman of the retailers' association which organised yesterday's protest said bar owners had to pay 143 different taxes and levies in the course of a year.

Italy's self-employed were being "tortured by a Soviet-style tax bureaucracy", Corriere della Sera said in a front-page editorial yesterday.

"Nothing yields a better snapshot of the failure and chaos of Italy's fiscal democracy than the fact that in just five years this country should have succeeded in producing no fewer than 1,900 new tax regulations," the newspaper said.

American Group W... 'Racist'

COMMUNIST

No a... Ever

The underlying theme is a simple one, that of secrecy versus openness. The Government's protests seem disingenuous
Richard Norton-Taylor
Law G2 page 7

American blacks step up war on 'terrorist' Nigeria

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

CASTING Nigeria as the South Africa of the 1990s, a high-profile coalition of black Americans has launched an all-out campaign against the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha — the community's first such attack on a black African government.

In a move hailed as a political coming of age for black America, veterans of the battle against apartheid will this week step up their war on the "terrorist government" of Nigeria. The former presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, writers Maya Angelou and Walker, musician Quincy Jones, and actors Bill Cosby and Danny Glover have joined TransAfrica — the movement which led the United States struggle against apartheid in South Africa — in urging the Clinton administration to punish the Nigerian regime.

Several black congressmen have proposed a raft of US sanctions against Nigeria, accusing Gen Abacha's regime of conducting a reign of terror, corruption and environmental degradation.

The Nigeria Democracy bill — tabled after last November's execution of playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa — seeks an end to all US aid to the country, a ban on flights be-

argo, but it will be something with quantifiable bite," TransAfrica president Randall Robinson said yesterday.

Campaigners are still pushing President Clinton on the fuel ban, arguing that since the US buys nearly half of Nigeria's oil this would be the quickest way to hurt the country's military rulers — who are accused of siphoning off oil profits into their own

'Silence in the face of such tyranny does no service to our community'

overseas bank accounts. Mr Robinson, the father of the US anti-apartheid movement, fears that opposition from some of Washington's allies, including Britain, may be holding Mr Clinton back. "Britain has always been a problem," he said. "They weren't leaders against apartheid, and I don't expect them to be leaders in this case."

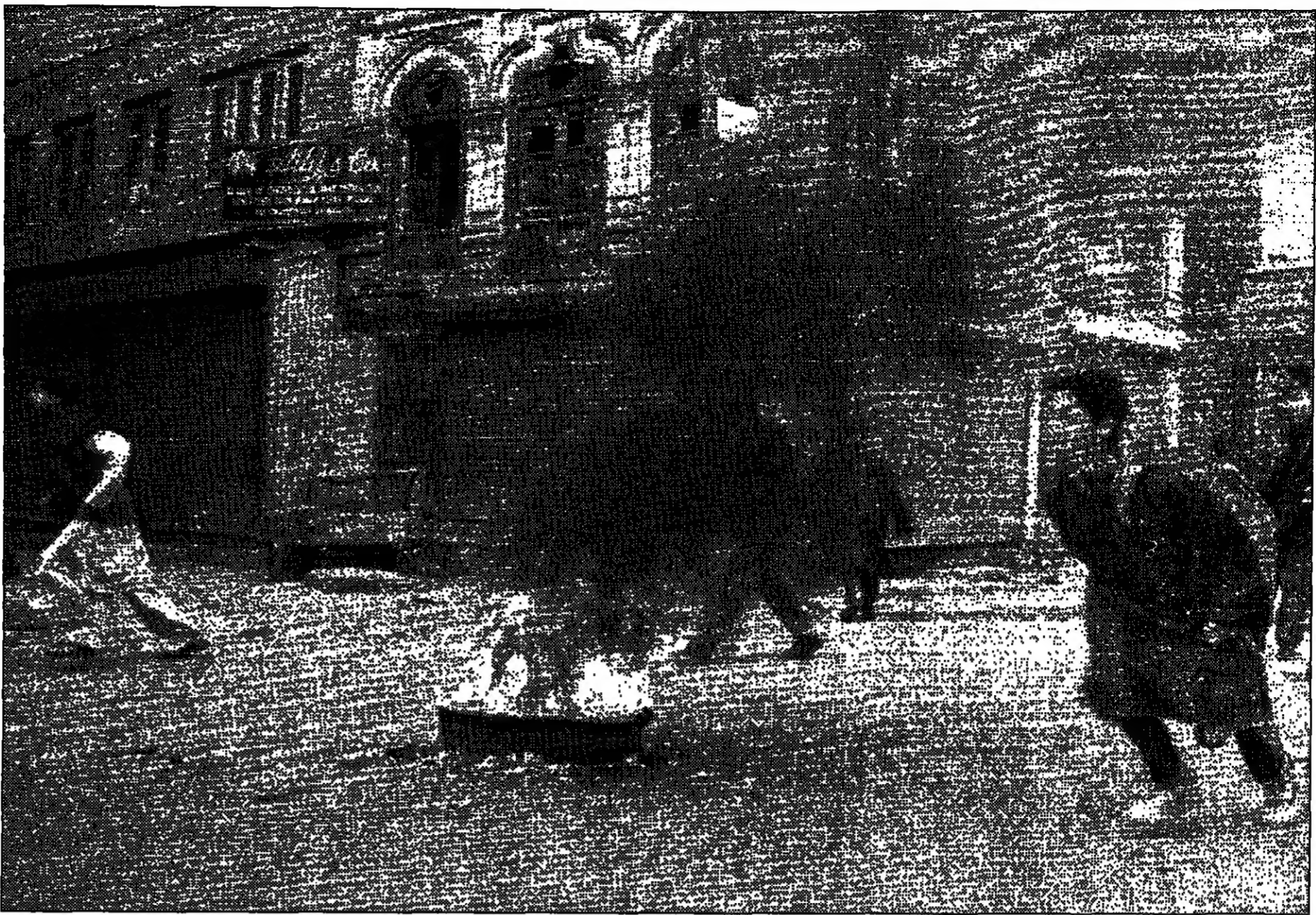
For black Americans, the new Nigeria campaign represents a dramatic shift from the previous policy of a united front with black Africa — whatever its shortcomings.

"It's certainly not comfortable to be publicly self-critical in this way," Mr Robinson admitted. "But you do our community no service with silence in the face of this kind of tyranny. Does it indicate a political maturation? Probably."

Although most black leaders back the Nigeria effort, some argue that publicising the flaws of sub-Saharan Africa's most populous country will encourage Republican budget-cutters anxious to end all US aid to the continent. Others fear that revelations of Nigerian atrocities play to the worst stereotypes of black self-government.

The loudest dissenter is Louis Farrakhan, the fiery leader of the Nation of Islam, who angered many African Americans in January when he broke ranks to visit Lagos. "What he did was give comfort to a tyrannical dictator," said Mr Robinson.

The TransAfrica leader admitted that opposition to Nigeria did not trigger the "visceral reflex" that apartheid provoked in American blacks. "But the victims of this suffer just as much as they would if the tyrants were white."



Flames of protest... Kashmiri demonstrators burn tyres in Srinagar yesterday, to protest against the police siege around the holy Muslim shrine of Hazrat Bal PHOTOGRAPH: AMAZ RAH

India sets limit on protest

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

FEARFUL that they are on the brink of a long siege that could wreck plans to hold elections in the Kashmir valley, India tried both threats and diplomacy yesterday to persuade separatist militants holed up inside Kashmir's holiest shrine to leave.

The stand-off between security forces and militants at Srinagar's Hazrat Bal, a white marble shrine which believers say contains a hair from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed, began on Sunday, when at least 10 people, in-

cluding a policeman, were killed in a gunbattle. Indian negotiators tried to convince more than two dozen militants to leave the shrine, fearing a repeat of the 33-day siege of the mosque in 1993. But the talks broke down when the imam and trustees of the mosque refused to participate.

As a protest strike took hold in the capital, Indian negotiators gave the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militants 10 minutes to leave the mosque. The authorities then retreated with a promise to resume talks early today.

The government of the state of Jammu and Kashmir later released a statement saying

anyone "attempting to misuse or desecrating any religious place" after Wednesday "will not be shown any leniency".

The statement, which officials said was aimed at the separatists in Hazrat Bal, called on all militants to surrender by tomorrow, and to turn over arms.

"After this date any person indulging in militant activities, harbouring militants or possessing unauthorised weapons will deal [with] severely under law," it said. The militants, who belong to a pro-Pakistan faction of the JKLF, threatened to burn down Hazrat Bal, a symbol of Kashmiri identity in the valley.

Sunday's shoot-out came within a week of the announcement of parliamentary elections in Kashmir on May 21.

Earlier this month, four militant leaders broke ranks with Kashmiri separatists to meet the home minister, S B Chavan, in New Delhi for talks. But the militants have since condemned plans to hold elections for three parliamentary seats in Kashmir, and there are fears that a long confrontation at Hazrat Bal could intensify Kashmiri opposition to the polls.

A police spokesman said last night that negotiations had yielded some results. Three bodies were removed from the site, he said. Hazrat Bal is a traditional

flashpoint in the region. The valley was paralysed yesterday by the strike to protest against the security forces' action, and police in Srinagar used tear gas to break up two demonstrations.

Shahid Siddiqi, leader of the JKLF faction which has controlled the shrine since last year, is among the armed men inside. The JKLF leader has demanded that security forces lift a curfew on areas within a mile radius of the shrine, and allow Kashmiris to visit the mosque so that his men can leave in safety.

Police vehicles patrolling the area have warned people to stay at home, and journalists have been barred from

approaching the shrine near Nageen Lake on the outskirts of Srinagar.

Mr Siddiqi has urged human rights organisations to appeal to security forces not to use force to end the stand-off, saying he feared a bloodbath. A JKLF commander, Bashrat Raza, was among the nine militants killed when security forces stormed the shrine on Sunday, Mr Siddiqi said.

Hazrat Bal was the scene of several shoot-outs last year between Mr Siddiqi's JKLF and renegade militants, believed to be the creation of the Indian security forces. The loss of the shrine would be a serious blow to the separatists' credibility in the valley.

with Bielant

'Britain wasn't a leader against apartheid, and it won't be one now'

tween the US and Nigeria, and an eventual oil embargo.

Campaigners also want South Africa-style break in all sporting links with Nigeria, with the US possibly denying visas to the Nigerian team in this summer's Olympic Games in Atlanta.

The Clinton administration will shortly announce its own action against the Abacha regime. It has already suspended financial credit, restricted admission to the US to Nigerians linked to the dictatorship and announced a ban on defence sales. Activists expect stiffer sanctions soon. "It won't be an oil em-

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Big flush to clean Grand Canyon

Martin Walker in Washington

A GREAT wall of water will be unleashed down the Grand Canyon today, in an artificial spring flood that is meant to repair ecological damage caused by dams built 50 years ago.

White water rafters stood ready to launch their rubber boats on the Colorado river, to take advantage of the flood that will take an estimated 30 hours to travel the 292 miles through the Grand Canyon.

For two weeks, 30 billion gallons a day will be poured through the narrow, winding canyon, one of the world's natural wonders.

The water will raise the river level by 6ft in the canyon, and still be 2ft higher than usual when it reaches the Pacific Ocean.

"This is about restoring one of the most amazing, most beautiful spots on earth," said Bruce Babbitt,



the interior secretary, as he flew out yesterday to push the button that will open the sluiceway on the Glen Canyon dam.

Over the years, the dam network has reduced the river temperature by 20F, built up deep layers of silt that used to be washed downstream, allowed new tree and plant species to drive out the native flora, and now threatens the Grand Canyon.

After 13 years and research costing \$60 million (\$40 million), and despite strong opposition from local fishermen, experts have concluded that without the floods, the shoreline will disappear. They point out that the mile-high canyon cliffs are starting to crumble.

More than 200 scientists will monitor the flow down

the length of the canyon. Currently crystal clear and ice cold after being dammed up, the Colorado river is expected to resume its brown colour, celebrated in folk songs as "too thick to drink, too thin to plough".

"If it works at this dam, there's no reason why we can't repeat it at other dams where we have had similar problems," David Wegner, who heads the Glen Canyon environmental studies group, said.

One of the hardest-worked rivers on earth, the Colorado intermittently dries up by the time it reaches the coast in Mexico. It powers some of the country's most powerful dams, which keeps the neon lights burning in Las Vegas.

Leader comment, page 8

Britain attacks China for plan to scrap Hong Kong's assembly

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

BRITAIN yesterday warned China that there was "no justification" for its plans to dismantle Hong Kong's elected parliament when it takes over the colony in 1997.

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, said China must show that the people of Hong Kong will be ruling the territory, as promised in the Anglo-Chinese joint declaration of 1984, which paved the way for the transfer of power.

Britain's ambassador to China, Sir Leonard Appleby, also expressed concern to Beijing after the talks between the Prime Minister John Major and China's prime minister, Li Peng, in Bangkok earlier this month.

China has made it clear that there will be little room for direct elections or dissent, and that it plans to disband Hong Kong's Legislative Council and replace it with a new "provisional legislature".

Statements upbraiding the Chinese are made by Britain in the knowledge that they will have little effect, but to assuage concerns in Hong Kong and to remind Beijing that events after 1997 will be closely followed.

Reuters adds from Taipei: China yesterday ended 18 days of war and Taiwan offered reconciliation in moves that raised hopes for the easing of tensions.

China said it had ended eight days of manoeuvres, wrapping up exercises which had sought to turn voters against Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, who scored a resounding victory in Saturday's presidential election.

In an unexpected overture, a top Taiwanese official said China's cherished dream of reunification could be achieved in just four years — as long as Beijing agreed to hold presidential elections.

"We want to tell the Communist Party that China will really move soon," James Soong, a provincial governor and close ally of President Lee, told a rally.

Mr Soong was reiterating Taipei's long-held policy, but it was the first time a date had been officially mooted.

Taiwan's stock and foreign exchange markets rose yesterday after Mr Lee's victory. The stock market recorded its 10th straight daily gain, ending up 0.03 per cent at 5,067.51 points. The Taiwan dollar ended the day at 27.258 against the United States dollar.

Okinawa governor faces showdown on US bases

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

A SHOWDOWN is looming between the Japanese government and the local authorities on the southern island of Okinawa after the high court ordered the island's governor yesterday to sign the renewal of land leases for United States bases.

If, as seems likely, Masahide Ota refuses, Ryutaro Hashimoto, the prime minister, will sign them.

It was the second blow for opponents of the bases which dominate the tiny island — 60 per cent of the 46,000 US troops based in Japan are in Okinawa. Mr Hashimoto said at the weekend that he would not move the bases to the mainland because of new security tensions in Asia.

Government officials said Mr Ota's objections were counter to national interests. Mr Ota has refused to sign the lease renewals, claiming to do so would infringe landowners' property rights and be unconstitutional.

The branch of the Fukuoka high court in Okinawa's capital, Naha, said he had no authority to make a judgment on whether appropriation of land was constitutional. Judge Ichiro Otsuka issued

the order to sign the compulsory expropriations saying that refusal "significantly hinders the public interest".

Simmering local discontent about the bases erupted last September when three US servicemen were accused of abducting and raping an Okinawan primary schoolgirl. The incident triggered demonstrations, and 3,000 of the almost 32,000 landowners who have plots used by the bases demanded their land back when the leases expire. The servicemen were found guilty this month and sentenced to up to seven years in jail.

Mr Ota has said he wants all the bases closed by 2015. He claims they hinder the island's development as a tourist resort and base for light industry.

With Mr Ota likely to continue to refuse to sign, the government will probably fail to complete the necessary legal work before leases on land occupied by a US telecommunications centre expire at the end of the month.

Shoichi Chibana, who owns part of the plot, has threatened to find a way in with his children on April 1, to play traditional Okinawan music. "There is no reason why I am being refused entry to my own land," he said.

Hiding behind experts

Tory populism has gone just when they need it

THIS IS bizarre, going on revolutionary. In almost every other field of policy — law and order, education, economics, to name but three — modern Conservatives have got where they are by hating the experts. They have despised them as conspirators against the public and rubbished them as defenders of an unacceptable status quo. Yet here we are, in the middle of a catastrophic collapse of public confidence in a major piece of British agribusiness — the beef industry — and the health secretary Stephen Dorrell has placed the Government's entire credibility squarely in the hands of just such a group of experts — the catchily titled Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee. Faced with their latest report on the beef crisis yesterday, Mr Dorrell has simply decided that the experts must be right. Apart from following the committee's advice, the Government has decided that it will do — nothing.

The committee's report essentially reiterates its previous views. It says that the dangers of BSE infection in British beef are "extremely small". It says that "additional measures" are not needed, though it does provide ministers with a permissive future get-out by adding the words "at this stage". This may be very sound scientific advice, but it is simply unrealistic about the real world and the state of public concern. It ignores the reality that the experts are tarnished by their poor track record in the past, by their alleged closeness to controversial producer interests and by the apparent exclusion from the committee's membership of prominent dissenting opinions. Whatever the justice of that case, the net result is that none of the things which might have reassured a dismayed public are to be done. No ban on beef and beef products in schools and hospitals. No moratorium on British beef sales. No slaughter of infected or

suspected herds. As a way of reclaiming the initiative this is extraordinarily brave — or extraordinarily stupid.

It is not as though this was the only policy open to the Government, even on the basis of the experts' conclusions. For instance, they could and should have taken up Labour's suggestion that BSE-free herds should be issued with a quality control endorsement, so that consumers can know that at least this beef is free from suspicion. Such quality control would not only reassure the public, but could act as a powerful incentive within the industry to ensure standards. They could and should have taken up the idea of publishing a full list of beef and beef-related products, so that consumers can be clear when they make purchases. They could and should have gone along with the idea of random testing for BSE at slaughterhouses. Again, this would reassure the public that something was being done, and put pressure on the market to ensure that standards are being maintained. Given the figures of BSE incidence published yesterday, which show this is an overwhelmingly British problem, this is a crazy failing.

For much of the past two decades, the Conservatives have instinctively positioned themselves on the populist side of many policy arguments, leaving Labour as the sometimes hapless defenders of the experts in many fields. Few can dispute that this instinct has brought the Tories rich political rewards. The beef crisis shows a remarkable reversal of roles, with Labour plugging the populist concerns and the Conservatives doggedly asserting that the experts know best. Tory MPs rallied indignantly and self-righteously to Mr Dorrell's support yesterday. But their instincts have let them down badly this time, and the voters will surely punish them for it when they get the chance.

Water: the vanishing resource

40 per cent of the world suffers water stress: worse is to come

WORLD WATER day passed the global village by last Friday with barely a flicker of interest. A UN conference in Beijing was warned that we are silently but surely heading towards "water shock", which will dwarf any oil crisis we have known. Water is indeed as precious as oil: it is mined like any other natural resource and has always been the world's largest extractive industry. The new crisis arises because in the last two decades, for the first time in human history, more is being taken out across the globe than nature is putting in. Some 80 countries and 40 per cent of the world's population are already experiencing "water stress".

Acquisition and control of water resources has driven communities to migrate since pre-historical times. It has generated increasing conflict as the world's river basins became fully colonised: almost half of the world's population now lives in states which have to share their water resources. From the Nile to the Rio Grande via the much-disputed Jordan, most of the world's best-known rivers are commodities in contention. Control of subaquifer water resources will be as contentious an item on the Israel-Palestine agenda as the question of ultimate sovereignty.

Yet to regard the water crisis as a problem of natural shortage or interstate conflict is to miss the point. Whether water is sufficient or not must depend in the end upon the extent of demand. Cases of unanticipated drought are relatively rare — though

global warming is likely to generate more such cases as distribution patterns are altered by climatic change. The real problem is consumption rather than supply. Crop irrigation consumes 90 per cent of all water used in poor countries, according to last year's World Bank report. Nearly half of that is wasted and never gets to the plants. Intensive agriculture is particularly greedy for the water which does reach the fields. The hidden cost of our hankering for out-of-season cut flowers will be paid for far away in Kenya and Peru. The revolution in urban third world consumption habits, hailed as part of the great economic miracle, soaks up more water. The effort to emulate the unreal standards of international tourism, with hot water around the clock and fertiliser-rich golf courses, is phenomenally wasteful. The same amount of water which irrigates a hectare of high-yield rice, says the Food and Agriculture Organisation, will fill the baths of 100 four-star hotel guests for 55 days.

Last week's Beijing conference on managing resources for large cities and towns is part of the run-up to the UN Habitat II conference to be held in Istanbul in June. This initiative, which stems from the Rio conference, places the responsibility where it properly lies upon our urban societies. The old injunction not to spend money like water needs updating. Whether directly through our taps or indirectly to satisfy an unsustainable lifestyle, we must stop spending water like water.

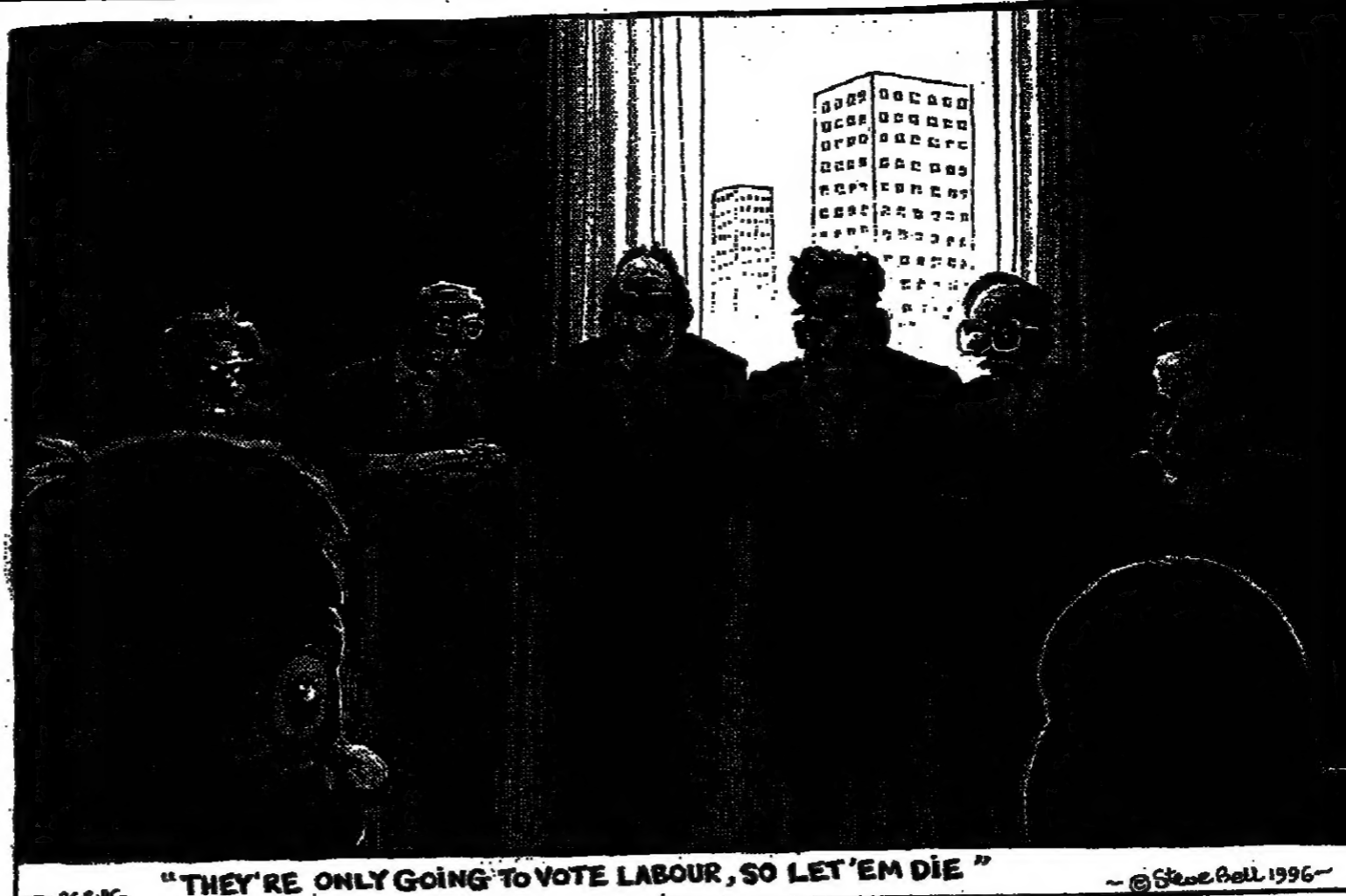
Sherwood Forest's stakeholder

Nottingham cools on Robin Hood when his ideas are ripening

COUNTIES, like corporations, need strong brand images to attract tourists and industry. Nottinghamshire is lucky in being endowed with a ready-made image which it has fully exploited. The phrase "Robin Hood Country" is built into the county's emblem. Its promotional literature, besides extolling lace-making, emphasises its location as "the gateway to a timeless treasure trove of legend and folklore surrounding the world's most famous outlaw — Robin Hood". It even has a site on the Internet offering "Hot Links Within Robin Hood Country" (though it has only recorded 311 visitors since set up in January).

Maybe that is why everything is about to change. Image makers called in by the City (Anglo-Saxon name, Nottingham) think it is too soft an image and should be dropped. As a spokesman for Boots, Nottingham's biggest employer, puts it: "Robin Hood doesn't really stand for the things that the city

has to offer." (Whether "Boots" stands for the things Boots has to offer is another moot point). Similarly it would be pointless to promote Nottingham's most famous modern son, Kenneth Clarke because Clarke might suggest shoes and that would be even more confusing for Boots. In any case, the Chancellor is part of a government which took money from the poor and gave it to the rich. To go in one leap from a Robin Hood policy to one of Robin-Hood-in-reverse might be too much for punters to swallow. It might also be bad politics. Robin Hood, let's face it, was the first person not only to believe in the currently fashionable theory of stakeholding, but to be prepared to take direct action to achieve a fairer distribution of the stakes. If Nottingham is cooling on the magnetism of its most illustrious citizen, surely there is a political party out there willing to pick up his message and run with it.



Letters to the Editor

Hard facts for farmers to digest

Adopting a more open policy

MADE a film about BSE nearly seven years ago which showed wine and bovine offal being rendered into cattle cake. We posed many questions about the risks of the sheep disease scrapie being transmitted into BSE, and of BSE similarly crossing a species barrier — from cows to humans.

The Government's chief veterinary scientist, Dr Keith Meldrum, told us that BSE was likely to be contained and eradicated within three or four years. Agriculture minister John McGreggor assured the NFU that MAFF's research programme could be relied upon to deal with any disease.

It looks as if, yes, the Government had us in a mess. But are consumers now to be taxed to make sure none of the culprits are out of pocket? And what of the vegetarians, vegans, environmentalists, organic growers and breeders, and animal-welfare campaigners, who have warned all along against the risks of unnatural farming practice? Are these all to be financially punished too as farmers and the food trade lose-adjust all their prices?

IAN BREACH,
(Former BBC Environment Correspondent.)
9 Park Place East,
Sunderland.

FARMERS who knowingly feed their herbivore cattle with feed from the remains of other animals, so as to increase their profits above 30 per cent a year, should not be compensated by the tax-paying consumer.

Any other business that produces a defective product is allowed to go under. Why are farmers compensated by a Government that is supposed to believe in market forces? There is simple uncontaminated beef and milk available within the EU. Make the greedy farmers who have been better off than most for many years, and have had little concern for the health of the nation, or for their cattle, pay for their greed.

G MARCEL,
Linton Road,
Wetherby,
West Yorkshire LS22 6HE.

FROM 1945 to 1985 I was a farmer and I kept both dairy and beef cattle. In those less-pressured years we gave the higher-producing milkers concentrates that in the early post-war years had to be home-grown and later, as they became available, proprietary cattle cake made of cereals, imported nuts, cotton-seed etc. The idea of adding non-vegetarian items like sheep offal to the diet of herbivores would have been

rejected as fundamentally wrong.

CYRIL EYRE,
Mutton's Cottage,
St Mabyn, Bodmin,
Cornwall.

IN 1990 I wrote an article published in Farmers Weekly, and reprinted in May 1990 by the Guardian, in which I predicted the chaos that has occurred this month if the Government refused to take precautionary action. I was told at the time by a senior ministry vet that I was "scare-mongering".

Since that date I and many other farmers have taken our own steps to prevent such a horror on our own farms — either by taking what MAFF considers to be the "extremist" road and going organic, or by simply making sure that all stock are fed on natural feed. But I am concerned that MAFF and the animal-feed manufacturers against eating beef, cattle for banning beef and killing off Britain's cow stock. Ten children a day are killed by cars on British roads, and over 800 more road casualties are recorded daily. Where's the public outrage? Where is the realisation that cars are too dangerous to tolerate?

CATHERINE MACK,
Norwood Farm, Bath Road,
North St Phillip,
Nr Bath BA3 6LP.

HOPE that your readers, 10 years' hence, will not be learning of another U-turn by another set of experts. The ex-

perts I have in mind are those who keep assuring us that foods modified by genetic engineering are perfectly safe to eat.

BRIAN P MOES,
85 Mill Crescent,
Kingsbury, Tamworth,
Staffs B78 2NW.

IT IS both reprehensible and hypocritical of the Dutch, Belgians and French to ban British beef whilst importing British calves from BSE-vulnerable dairy stock for their own veal industry. It is particularly foolhardy of concerned Europeans to discriminate against British beef and not British calves.

KAREN E NAASH,
Devonshire Avenue,
Southsea PO4 9ED.

TEN people die from what may be related to mad cow disease. Result: major panic, revulsion against eating beef, calls for banning beef and killing off Britain's cow stock. Ten children a day are killed by cars on British roads, and over 800 more road casualties are recorded daily. Where's the public outrage? Where is the realisation that cars are too dangerous to tolerate?

JUDITH HAMMA,
15 Jansons Road,
London N15 4JU.

The gold cup

THE forecast that only one in nine marriages is likely to survive for 50 years (March 20) made me wonder what proportion of those who wed in 1945, as my husband and I did, have made 50. A quick check through our Christmas-card list shows that of our friends and relatives who married about 50 years ago, there are 19 couples still together in or out of individuals whose marriages ended through a partner's death. No divorces. Not bad going, but how typical is it?

NAN PAYNE,
Durban, Dinecor,
Hereford HR2 6LQ.

DID not say, in my research for the Environment Department or to your correspondent, that "there is not going to be enough water to go round"? Water curbs unavoidable. More 20% to rule in or out of any particular response to increasing demands for water, nor claim that restrictions would have to be imposed, nor discuss the idea of government strategy for water companies. The speech was purely concerned with demand forecasts.

PAUL HERRINGTON,
University of Leicester,
Leicester LE1 7RH.



A tale hawked by predators

I WAS saddened to see you giving a platform to the anti-raptor lobby (A Country Diary, March 25). The stories quoted emanate from game interests disappointed that, under current legislation, they cannot kill birds of prey. Yes, sparrowhawks kill songbirds but, in a healthy environment, both will coexist perfectly happily in terms of the population levels. Intensive farming is implicated in the decline of songbirds and Veronique Heath would do well to give that subject higher priority.

(Dr) Nick Rosstler,
County bird recorder,
West Barn, Ordley,
Hexham,
Northumberland NE46 1SX.

SINCE the sparrowhawk's diet is based on birds, it is their population which is regulated by their prey and not vice versa. For generations they have evolved, with their prey species, to form part of a rich, mixed avifauna. It is only because of agricultural chemicals that this once-common predator has become extinct in large parts of the country.

And there is a way of protecting small birds: stick garden cases into the lawn round the feeders. They will interrupt the hawk's attack and give the birds a chance to escape.

CHRIS MEAD,
The Nursery,
Hilborough, Thetford,
Norfolk IP26 5BW.

Sour Orange

JOAN Smith's acute piece about the Orange Prize for women's fiction (And the winner is... a woman, March 25) still misses the scheme's greatest fault. Ghettoism doesn't matter — gender is no better or worse than the Commonwealth qualification for the Booker or the age qualification for the John Llewellyn Rhys. What matters is that yet another large sum of money (£20,000) will go to a single writer who has reached a point where she almost certainly doesn't need it.

When my partner sat down to start writing a first novel, the time had to be shed out of her non-office life, leaving me alone with the children for weekends and evenings. We both, however, agreed our family life neither could nor should continue like this. As her manuscript was tentatively dropped into the postbox, all we hoped for was that it would earn her enough childcare to write the next. Had it not sold (or for not enough), where would her writing career have been? Jonathan Merson,
34 Lillieshall Road,
London SW4 0LP.

WHY are adoption files treated like state secrets? Tony May is not alone in finding it impossible to view his own file.

My adoption was finalised at the City of Leicester Juvenile Court way back in 1962. About 10 years ago, I asked to see my file — hoping that this might answer a number of questions. While the authorities at Leicester confirmed the existence of my file, they refused me any access to it. A kind lady from an Adoption Support Group here in Nottingham has since informed me that there would be very little in the file anyway.

Releasing my file is not going to cause a run on the pound; it is not going to make it any easier for the Russian army to sweep across the Rhine or lessen England's chances in the World Cup. So why this obsessive secrecy?

Frank Randall,
89 First Avenue,
Canton,
Nottingham NG4 1PH.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a telephone number. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used.

Circles and squares, approached from the left

ACCORDING to Martin Kettle (Shadows of doubt behind Blair, March 25), Tony Blair "needs reinforcements", as few of the current shadow cabinet "impress as heavy weight potential ministers". And these reinforcements could be supplied by imposing candidates on local Labour parties — many of whom, as Tribune has reported, have been prevented from beginning the selection process. The trouble with this is that it fails to recognise that endemic problem that political parties have in accepting independent-minded people of principle, for it would seem that their treachery far outweighs their abilities, and the Labour Party is no exception to this. If Labour has too much deadwood at the top, it might just have something to do with the fact that too many people have received preferment in the past for "being one of us". There are plenty of examples of talented members of the

PLP who have been passed over in favour of clones of the Labour leadership. So the constituencies' Kettle describes would be obliged to field yet more clones.

Mark Seddon,
Editor, Tribune,
308 Gray's Inn Road,
London EC1X 8DF.

MATTHEW ENGEL writes that the "sight of marchers and banners no longer stirs the blood" (Monday Sketch, March 25) after an apparently poorly attended anti-racist demonstration in London.

Perhaps he should look northwards. At the same time as the London demo, there was a much larger, successful demonstration taking place in Liverpool in support of the sacked dockers and their dynamic women supporters.

Keith Sinclair,
Secretary, Hull
Trades Council,
27 Strathmore Avenue,
Hull HU6 7HL.

FOUR weeks ago more than 15,000 people trod the same route from the Embankment to Trafalgar Square to protest against the Asylum Bill. On Saturday some 800 marched to Ilford police station in response to the death in police custody of an asylum-seeker, Ibrahim Sey.

What might have made a more interesting story is the lack of any opposition to the Asylum Bill from Her Majesty's Opposition.

Since the Tories introduced this desperate piece of race baiting, the Labour Party has treated the whole thing as an embarrassment and something they want out of the way.

While it is to be hoped that Labour vote against the Bill on its final reading, they have done nothing to obstruct this nasty piece of legislation or to force a public debate on it.

Chris Bambery,
Socialist Workers Party,
PO Box 82,
London E3 3LH.

A Country Diary

SOMERSET: It is not only nowadays that the funding of rural education puts a burden on parents. A letter of 1889 to the Hornington village schoolmaster survives: "Sir, I hear you intend punishing my boy for not bringing a copy book. I give you to understand it is not in my power to buy copy books." The school, with its schoolmaster's house, was built in 1896 beside a lane through farmland belonging to the squire. It was the result of the rector's initiative and the beneficence of the squire and gentry. It thrives, in its original buildings and idyllic setting, today. A stream runs through the garden. There is a playing field and a swimming pool. Cows look over the fence. At the start and finish of school, the lane is full of cars, leaving little space for passing horses. Fifty of the 89 children come from outside the village. Last year's stringent budget meant the loss of half a teaching post, but the parents are an effective body,

raising large sums for things like the new cover of the swimming pool, which my 11-year-old guides showed me. We saw the welcoming library in what used to be the schoolmaster's living and dining rooms, the store in his bedroom, and computers in his bedrooms. In the hall, the playgroup that uses it three times a week was busy, and on the shelves was a fine collection of percussion instruments. More than half the children learn an instrument. One of my guides comes on foot from Duck Laze, just around the corner past the pond. There are children and grandchildren of former pupils on the roll. Last year, some of the residents who remembered the war came in to reminisce. The children listened and produced a wonderful publication called "Will it never end?" and a dramatisation that played to packed houses at St Margaret's Hall a few yards down the lane.

JOHN VALLINS

Diary
Matthew Norman

THE Dunkirk spirit is thriving in what may well be the most vulnerable business in the world this week. At the Popesey, a restaurant near Olympia in West London, the problem is simply stated. While the menu offers no starters whatever, there are exactly three choices of entrée: rump steak, sirloin steak or fillet steak. Save for chips and side salads, and a few puns, that is it. "You could say we are a little exposed at the minute," says Ian Hutchison, the heroic owner and chef, "but so far things are fine." You will, all the same, be planning to change your menu? "Far from it, I'm thinking of raising my prices." This Diary has eaten much of Mr Hutchison's meat — it is hung for a fortnight before travelling from Scotland by train, and should be eaten extremely rare lest the heat affect those prions — and cannot recommend it highly enough. However, another Popesey regular has buckled under the pressure to moderate eating habits. "In the light of all this publicity, I will no longer be eating six-ounce fillets," Auberon Waugh tells me. "I will be having eight-ounce fillets instead."

MEANWHILE, in shock medical news, a man reporting to a specialist after extensive neurological tests has heard that the news was mixed. "Okay, doctor," he said, "what's the bad news?" The doctor said: "You've got mad cow disease." "Oh my God," said the man, "but what's the good news?" "There's nothing to worry about," said the specialist. "You'll know sod all about it by Wednesday week."

MYSTERY ensouls Terry Major-Ball, the author and television personality. Chatting away about his diet (he has made a sudden spurt, and lost a stone), Terry lets slip that he is soon to reveal. He will not, for example, confirm that gnomes are involved in this last trip to Australia, you may recall, revolved around the International Gnome Convention in New Zealand. "I'm going to have a look at the show," he says, "that's all." Is there, a TV film crew involved? "I am simply going to cast my eye over the show," he insists. "Perhaps we can talk about it when I return." Perhaps indeed, and upon this enigmatic note, we say farewell and God speed.

TAKI-GEOURGE, the Cypriot writer and peon in GCSE English Language, has flown into the most frightful hate at an article in this newspaper. T-G recently claimed that someone is menacing him most grievously (rumour suggests it is a Bolivian arms trader to whom he once served a poorly-mixed highball on a yacht), and the Guardian's report of this has upset his tender sensibilities. It implied he is rightwing and racist, and even suggested he was paranoid. However, as T-G — who suggested a curfew for all black men under 25 after being mugged by three "black cowards" — put it in the Sunday Times, this is nothing more than malicious invention by those at this paper who envy him. Of course, and I personally wish to dissociate myself from that article. "I am de vito is not a Guardian trait," he sagely wrote. "It is one of mine." It certainly is, and how fine to read him on such joyous form.

I AM relieved to note that dear old Michael Winner can still find the time in his frantic film-directing schedule to keep one eye on newspaper coverage of his activities. The following apology has appeared in the Aberdeen Press & Journal: "In our issue dated March 18, it was said that Mr Michael Winner wore 'grubby Y-fronts'. We accept that this is not true and that it should not have been printed." This is all very touching, of course, but since when was it libellous to accuse someone of wearing Y-fronts?



A butcher's hook at the Government

Commentary Hugo Young

THE LAST great ministerial health panic occurred in 1980. William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, began to run round London talking of a deadly plague about which we knew nothing, that might soon infect thousands, maybe millions, perhaps even closing the country down. This was something out of Africa that went by the name of Aids, which a secret Whitehall committee was examining under Whitelaw's chairmanship. His excitement was shared by other pillars of level-headed rectitude, like the Cabinet Secretary. There appeared, in irreverent moments, to be something comical about this, the apprehension of the elderly British establishment, as it ruminated on sexual practices that had never previously crossed its collective mind.

The Aids panic subsided, and the British Government gradually became admired in much of the world for the comparative enlightenment of both its medical and its social approach to the proliferating crisis. But politicians were dealing there with a problem, albeit a terrifying one, for which they held no causative responsibility. Aids was and is an awful visitation, which has claimed thousands of victims. But ministers were and are not guilty. They would like to say the same about mad cow disease. Stephen Dorrell was saying it again yesterday. At no stage, it startlingly appeared, had ministers made a single misjudgment about how to handle BSE. Mr Dorrell represents himself and colleagues past and present as not in any way contributory agents of BSE, with its associated human condition Creutzfeldt-Jakob, but as its victims. Like the direct sufferers, 10 of whom are now admitted to be dead, ministers seem to think they are the accidental fall-guys for a condition which goes beyond their responsibility.

This isn't an altogether unreasoning contention. Ministers listened, said the Health Secretary, to scientists. For the last 10 years, they've had to balance the expert advice they've been getting, and weigh the probabilities. All the time, the scientists have been in the saddle, with ministers following faithfully behind. For this reason, they should not be blamed. Indeed, Dorrell himself takes special credit for insisting on publicity for the new wisdom of the moment last week, when one lot of scientists went to the Government and inform that they had revised their predecessors' opinion. It is a seductive thesis. I suppose the spread of BSE might have happened under any government in any country. The fact is that it happened on the Tory watch, and this is more than coincidence. Two of the strands running through the ghastly history are distinctively Conservative.

On the other hand, there are the scientists. Here, I think what Mr Dorrell revealed yesterday was a deformity which is all too likely to afflict any government in power. In every answer he rooted himself to the scientists' opinion, with a booming indifference to its obvious frailties. The scientists, after all, have been wrong before. The ones the Government listened to between 1986 and 1988 were wrong in the lack of urgency they brought to their diagnosis of BSE, and its probable cause in the offal and other rejected parts of animals. They were similarly mistaken in the certainty with which they advised that the infection could not cross into the human species. In de-

pending on them, ministers were led to make egregious errors of advice and decision. For the Health Secretary to invoke science exclusively yesterday sounded, therefore, like the prejudice of a man determined above all else to damp down national alarm. He spoke of "scientists" as though these were of a single school that could not be questioned. He overlooked the historical fact that it is the scientists whom officialdom rejected, such as Professor Acheson at Leeds and Dr Harang at Newcastle, whose opinions of a few years ago turn out to have been broadly correct. In this he was behaving more like a minister than a Tory. A Labour minister would almost certainly do the same. On both ministers the pressures would be identical to listen to scientists whom their department selected for the reliability rather than the boldness of their judgments. One thing government scientists are not paid for is to sound an alarm that might panic the party and, just possibly, ruin bits of the national economy.

Two of the strands running through the ghastly history are distinctively Conservative

A Labour government would have difficulty doing any better with its scientists. A Labour Britain will be just as vulnerable as Tory Britain to the appalling consequences of our heavily-industrialised food business. But this doesn't let the present Government off the hook. Only leading herself to the task of digestion. In the past — such is the force of convention — it has been customary to pity Brookner's introspective harpist: the lovelorn Kitty, the patient Blanche, and blighted Dr Weiss. In the new era of the "happy single", these spinsters must be regarded as trail-blazing achievers, with a flair for independent living.

Similarly, Philip Larkin's Mr Bleaney is now to be envied for his abundant leisure time and the idiosyncratic decor of his bedsit. Larkin questioned Mr Bleaney's mood when he contemplated his surroundings, and considered "that how we live measures our own nature", but this is to forget the individual's need for private space and time. Uninhibited by company and the demands of conversation, Bleaney is able to explore his interest in gardening and indulge in his personal hygiene without interference or criticism. It is couples, who can only dream of long evenings spent with a tray and the radio, who now deserve our sympathy.

Consenting singles in private



Catherine Bennett

ALONE, in the depths of an Anita Brookner novel, a spinster prepares to eat: "When dining alone, Kitty Maule tended to dispatch the meal as quickly as possible and also to distract herself from the actual business of eating. She found it helpful to balance the tray on her knees rather than to sit down forlornly at an empty table, and to read, listen to the radio, or even sometimes to wander about, as if only leading herself to the task of digestion." In the past — such is the force of convention — it has been customary to pity Brookner's introspective harpist: the lovelorn Kitty, the patient Blanche, and blighted Dr Weiss. In the new era of the "happy single", these spinsters must be regarded as trail-blazing achievers, with a flair for independent living.

who have kicked away the ladder of dependence," she alleged. "They get lots of undisturbed sleep, and don't waste time arguing about bins or marmalade." How many couples can say as much? For some, arguments about bins and marmalade go on for weeks, even years. So what does these free spirits do, once they have decisively put out the trash, and smoothly replaced the marmalade? Fanny? Compose? Write poetry? They do as they please. "And if this also means that they pick their own feet and talk for hours on the phone," Truss challenged, "who cares?" Well, nobody, that's who. "They eat homemade pizza without shame, straight from the box," she feistily continued, "Once I installed a cat flap all by myself..." Although singles like to advertise their individuality, their cherished eccentricities can be strikingly similar. Singles love their cats. Singles enjoy uninterrupted bed-rest. Singles rejoice, in particular, in eating odd things, at unconventional hours. In the Daily Mail, Jane Green made much of this trait: "If I come home in the middle of the night and decide to raid the freezer for Ben & Jerry's Chunky Monkey Ice cream, I can eat the whole tub and no one's around to call me a pig."

Ten years on from Chernobyl we face the threat from BSE. John Gray argues that we will pay even higher prices for technological hubris unless we mend our ways

Nature bites back

THE CURRENT crisis over the safety of British beef occurs within a month of the 10th anniversary of the explosion at Chernobyl. The two meltdowns that occurred on April 26, 1986, at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, 72 miles from the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, created a mile-high plume of radioactive gas and particles whose fallout was felt in countries as distant as Sweden and Greece. A large area around Chernobyl remains deserted and will be uninhabitable for several centuries.



The long-term effects of this fall-out on human health and the natural environment are still not precisely calculable. They are undoubtedly highly significant. Official Soviet attempts to play down their seriousness were a key factor in fueling the demands for glasnost and for Ukrainian independence which triggered the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

It is a mistake to think that responsibility for the environmental dangers we are facing lies only with Thatcherism. A larger threat to human health arises from the hyper-industrialisation of farming and from the technological hubris which pervades our entire culture. Farming today is an industry at the cutting edge of technological intervention in natural processes. It embodies, more than any other traditional manufacturing industry, the modern belief that the Earth is made up of raw materials for human technological ingenuity to work on.

Did it not occur to anyone that feeding animal protein to what nature has evolved to be a herbivorous species might be dangerous? Yet even such an act of folly is less hubristic than policies for the genetic engineering of animal species that are now on the scientific and commercial agenda. The industrialisation of farming is only an incident in a much grander project of subduing nature to human designs. Is it altogether fanciful to see the threat of a major outbreak of CJD as a symptom of nature's rebellion against human hubris?

Much of our culture is still animated by the anthropocentric belief that the human species is independent of nature. This belief is at the root of some of the most admirable modern achievements. We have eradicated some infectious diseases and, in parts of the world, we have eliminated starvation and the worst forms of destitution. These successes have encouraged the expectation that the natural limits placed on us by scarcity and mortality can be progressively overcome. They support the conviction that there is no human problem that is not soluble by technological ingenuity.

There are many signs that such hopes are hubristic. Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases are returning in forms that are highly resistant to antibiotics. Male fertility is declining, apparently as a consequence of changes we have made but not begun to understand in our everyday environment. The pursuit of intensive agriculture through the development of high-yielding crops has produced monocultures that are exceptionally vulnerable to disease. In these and other examples, the modern project of constructing a technosphere in which the human species is freed from dependency upon the Earth is coming up against limits imposed by nature. It is as if the Earth itself were resisting our attempt to transform into an adjunct of human purposes that cannot undo the technological progress of the past several centuries. Nor should we attempt to do so, since practically everything that is worthwhile in modern societies comes from their no longer living on the edge of subsistence — an achievement that only technological advance has made possible.

The lesson to be drawn from the prospect of a CJD epidemic is not Luddism. It is that we must respect the natural world on which we depend more, and invest fewer of our hopes in the project of transforming it by the use of technology. Farming practices which treat animals not as living creatures but as assemblages of manipulable genes and proteins must be reformed. Projects of genetic engineering that propose to alter species — including the human species — for the sake of commercial or even humanitarian benefit must be viewed with suspicion. The potential benefits of new technologies must always be weighed against their risks. We should be ready to err on the side of caution.

A genuinely conservative policy of this kind goes against the grain of much that is good in our culture. It is easily caricatured as unreasonably risk-averse. The evidence of recent history suggests that it is technological utopianism that is unreasonable. Unless we moderate our hopes of technology, the disasters of the past decade will be repeated, perhaps on a grander scale. It would be a sad commentary on the human capacity for learning from its mistakes if, 10 years after Chernobyl, we were to fail to grasp the warning against human hubris that that disaster, and the one that may be unfolding in Britain, hold for us.

John Gray is a fellow of Jesus College, Oxford

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10 OBITUARIES

Ron Hayward

The scourge of Militant

RON HAYWARD, who has died aged 78, was general secretary of the Labour Party during one of the most difficult periods of the party's history. His tenure of the post will always be remembered for the memory of the problems which beset the party at the end of the 1970s.



Stand and deliver... Ron Hayward at a Labour Party Conference in Blackpool

He owed his election as general secretary in 1972 to Benn's vote. It occurred in hilarious circumstances. It had been assumed that the deputy general secretary, Gwyn Morgan, would succeed to the post, but the left-wingers on the National Executive Committee supported Hayward as an alternative candidate. Harold Wilson, who was then Leader of the Opposition, had declared that he would not vote but was persuaded that this would lead to the election of Morgan and a victory for supporters of Roy Jenkins. Wilson supported Hayward and the candidates tied at 14 votes each.

It was then proposed that Benn, as party chairman, should have the casting vote and this, too, tied at 14 votes each. The meeting adjourned and Wilson discreetly persuaded an elderly trade union delegate that while he did not need to switch his vote away from Morgan, he could nevertheless vote in favour of allowing the chairman to use

his casting vote. This was carried. Benn voted for Hayward, and so began his 10 years of torment at Transport House and, latterly, in the new headquarters in Walworth Road to which he oversaw the party's transfer.

During an interview Hayward gave me on his election, one of the most often told stories about him originated. He was born in Oxfordshire and always retained a vivid

remainder of that in his account. I asked him about his leisure interests and how he had spent his boyhood, and I thought he replied that he was very fond of skating. I inquired politely whether he preferred roller-skating or ice-skating. He looked extremely puzzled before replying that he was talking about "boy scouting".

His voice, his friendly pipe-smoking image and his

instead. Later, after becoming general secretary, it was Reg Underhill who conducted the massive inquiry into the infiltration of the Labour Party by the Militant Tendency.

Hayward had always opposed the aggressive right-wing bureaucrats who controlled the party machinery in the 1950s and 1960s and it was because of the more open regime that then followed that he was partly blamed for the continual confrontation between right and left and the internal party warfare. It was certainly the case that the party's own methods of operation were neglected during this period, enabling the formation of what the general secretary himself admitted was "a party within a party".

But Labour's problems went deeper than party management and Hayward probably did better than others might have managed in difficult circumstances. He had a good working relationship with Harold Wilson — who recognised the general secretary's closeness to the heart of the party — and delivered him two general election victories in 1974. When Wilson resigned in 1976, Hayward suggested to a sceptical Benn that "things got too much for him and he's lost his nerve".

History suggests that Hayward was probably right. He did not lose his own nerve, staying in the job until his 65th birthday in 1982, but by then he was tired and infuriated by the endless wrangling he was obliged to endure.

He retired to his garden in Kink and enjoyed the family life that he had been obliged to sacrifice for many years. He leaves a widow, Phyllis, whom he married in 1943, three daughters and 10 grandchildren.

Julia Langdon
Ronald George Hayward, political manager, born June 27, 1917; died March 28, 1996

Mary Lavin

Ireland's acute observer

MARY LAVIN, who has died aged 88, was born in Massachusetts, but grew up and was educated in Ireland. As a short-story writer, she will be remembered with O'Flaherty, O'Faolain and O'Connor, though her voice was entirely her own. Another renowned practitioner of the art — Elizabeth Bowen — described the modern storyteller's task as revealing the hidden significance of "the small event", and in this Lavin succeeded superbly well.

Lord Dunsany, writing when she was unknown, drew attention to "stories of quite ordinary lives, stories of people who many might suppose have no story to tell in their experience; and when she tells these stories there may be some whose ears, attuned to the modern thriller, may suppose they are not stories at all." She harvested details, Dunsany went on, especially when they didn't appear to matter. All that seemed any and unimportant was part of her mill: she was already cultivating a genius for beady seeking out what the less observant left behind.

By now, nearly 50 years on, it has been demonstrated that stories which, at first glance seem to be "not stories at all" are among the best there are. During all that time, Lavin was at the forefront of establishing a place for them, and of ensuring that what began with Chekhov did not wither. In

Lavin ploughed a solitary furrow. In her story The Shrine, an old priest honours a possible vision of the Virgin by commissioning a statue, knowing as he does so that this gesture will bring prosperity to his parish and his people. And that being so, argues, how can it matter if vulgarly prospers as well as everything else?

Short stories are often portraits and in this one, as in many of Lavin's, the portrait is perfect. "And what a sharp ear the old man had for discovering illicit pregnancies! In a matter of hours he'd have nipped the scandal in the bud and, with alarming despatch, married off the offending girl. Wherever possible he married her to the father of the child, but if for any reason that was not possible, he'd unload her on to some ageing but compliant figure. But he made his own mark on French literature. Firstly as a novelist of the *nouveau roman*, who won the Prix Médicis in 1958. Whereas Frantzoni had told stories and invented real people, Claude reinvented the territory of fiction and sought to communicate the contents of individual consciousness rather than invent plots. And secondly as a memoirist publishing his journal in 13 volumes (with a 14th in the press).

Claude Mauriac

Details in a diverse life

IN 1939 Claude Mauriac, who has died aged 61, was sitting in the corner of the room listening to his father, François, and André Gide arguing about the merits of Alfred de Musset. Each quoted abundantly from memory, but Claude was silent. He did not know the poetry of Musset by heart. "He's a barbarian," his father said. François Mauriac also wrote a journal, *Sarcoté*, in which his son occasionally appears: "Claude carried my two suitcases; I took Claude to Notre Dame to show him where Claudel was converted..."



Claude Mauriac... Journals with a fascinating cast

Thus Claude is a shadowy figure. But he made his own mark on French literature. Firstly as a novelist of the *nouveau roman*, who won the Prix Médicis in 1958. Whereas Frantzoni had told stories and invented real people, Claude reinvented the territory of fiction and sought to communicate the contents of individual consciousness rather than invent plots. And secondly as a memoirist publishing his journal in 13 volumes (with a 14th in the press).

But he did not follow the normal process of the journal. Although each entry is dated, they do not follow each other chronologically. Consecutive pages cover a conversation with Malraux in a restaurant, August 28, 1937; a conversation with him, January 17, 1932; and the souvenir of a family party, July 28, 1936. Sometimes there is a quotation from an old family document. For example, one of 1878, with the title of a curious series of figures who as-

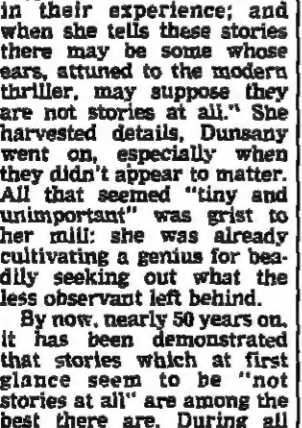
sumed an almost father-like position in Claude's life. They included Mitterrand and the much younger Michel Foucault.

Valéry once said that he could never write a novel that began: "The Marquis went out at five o'clock." In a gesture of defiance Claude both began and titled a novel with these words in 1961. The world is that of the *Cercueil* de Buci in the Latin Quarter of Paris. The content is that of observing, remembering, reflecting. The garcon in the *Café de Buci* offers a correction: she wants "un jus de tomate" not "une tomate" as she has ordered. "Tomate" is Fernand with germinade. He recalls, at Nîmes, in the *Café des Sports*, you never asked the garcon to wipe your table with his "serviette". You asked for "un petit coup de casimir".

Both the novels and the journals amass detail. Mauriac does not think that in the 1940s the English would have stooped so low as to install listening devices in de Gaulle's rooms in London, but he reflects that nowadays a single pearl in a woman's necklace can contain such an instrument.

Claude Mauriac notes that people are like children. They compare their ages and they count the months that separate them. But he never appeared to count the years.

Douglas Johnson
Claude Mauriac, writer, born April 25, 1914; died, March 22, 1996



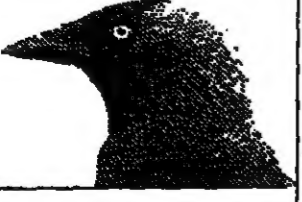
Mary Lavin... remembered with O'Flaherty, O'Faolain and O'Connor, though her voice was entirely her own

What Alan Ross called the "shapeless impressionism" of the post-Deaton Welch period, in which china bric-a-brac and the surreal relationship with his mother appeared controlling forces," passed Lavin by. Yet that particular fashion dominated the mainstream short story in her formative writing years; fortunately she may have simply been unaware of it.

Fortunately, too, she remained untouched by the short story as so excessive a literary product that it results in spectacularly derisive appreciation. The isolation experienced in a small off-shore island, especially perhaps during the last war when she was beginning to write, may have been a blessing in disguise.

Like the best storytellers,

Jackdaw



Basquiat rock

THIS IS NOT Black Art. I maintain, and this is NOT ART, well no, this is STUFF and I like it, yeah, yeah, yeah. This STUFF rocks. A two-headed Janus of an approach, vomiting and questioning at the same time. A squash of Schwitters sound and sense, hearing tabulations of pre-Socratic philosophers' jostle, or rubber 'gains' Penk. Like a *baad* reading of Lautréamont's "Beautiful as a chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table". But nothing surreal here. The dreaming is forced-fed into the dawn of our consciousness. Confuse me,

sir? Well bless you, yes please. Chance juxtaposition. Your chance is not the same as my chance... No order, no function. Basquiat takes a cursive swipe and re-establishes the disorder that is reality. The pure joyful chaotic misman of it all. Goo-goo-ga-jo. Refracting fact fractions facting refact. He's milking the dictionary, wiping up the puddles of Anglo debris and scoffing the lot. He's stealing us limb by word... After Warhol's death in 1986, Jean-Michel himself started to die bit by bit. This ugly and tragic code will probably be the Hemdriz-Cobain factor that will speed his reputation into the beyond. The Temple of Guys who died for their art. It's a drag. Rubber-stacking at the crash-site shall take place. The more STUFF that goes up on the wall, the less it will be seen. Eyes searching for drug clues — how black was he, how white inside, can you see him being sad or happy? Look for a long time and we'll see him wave... His STUFF is the continually dividing cell of our future-past. Embryos with all the cross-referenced features

in place. But the stash was terminated before maturity. I should like to have seen it all grown-up.

David Bowie dabbles in hyper-prose for his appreciation of the artist Jean-Michel Basquiat in the magazine *Modern Painters*.

Clarke checked

AS A READER of Prospect since its inception, I have been amused by Jeremy Clarke's regular contributions. But in the latest issue I feel he has gone too far. To use his column to unburden some of the guilt he must feel about episodes from his past life is one thing; but to abuse his position as a man of letters to preen and gloat over his imminent fortune — derived as it presumably will be from an autobiography filled to the gunwhales with even shabbier accounts — is quite another.

Our relationship, if it can be called that, has continued ever since. Recently, however, it has taken a rather sour turn. Far from being the diffident cove that his writings would have the reader believe, his elevation to the ranks of the wealth-sodden literati has revealed a distasteful side to his character. It is well known to him that I am currently in straitened circumstances. This has done nothing to prevent him from pestering me with abusive telephone calls, informing me of the sort of financial auction for his autobiography. Prefacing his tirades with the quip "How fare the poor this day?" he proceeds to speak of quantities of cash that I can barely comprehend.

The sound of my pathetic whimpering only spurs him on. His megalomania is even more apparent during his frequent "state visits". By publishing his ramblings, you are, albeit unknowingly, providing him with yet another. To ridicule and defame one's less fortunate acquaintances is

ungentlemanly. Please do not give him continued success.

A letter from disgruntled victim Susan Heath of Westcliffe-on-Sea, in Prospect.

Glug, glug, glug

AT BOOT camp, we've been knocking down and squaring up to bring you the perfect magazine for the next millennium. You know, the multi-media mushroom cloud, the global village, the starchy tech future and all that. Well, the good news is we managed to sort out an e-mail address for those of you who prefer downloading electronic correspondence to writing on pulped-up Norwegian pine. Unfortunately, we spent too much time boarding, bingeing and re-running a video of Bjork's impersonation of Mike Tyson at Bangkok airport to create a web site on the Net. Call us "old skool" (go on) but we'd still rather live in the real world than surf a virtual one. We're your intolerant neighbour upstairs, cranking up Daft Punk's Da Funk at three in the morning. We're the ones

queuing behind you in sub-zero temperatures, trying to get into a Big gig rammed tighter than a...

Okay, you know the story. We're the ones who got sent promo of the Lynch Mob remix of Champagne Supernova. That's us in the corner, sneaking in through a secret door with an "all areas" laminate, under the protection of Michael Jackson's minders. Just remember, though, we'll



Blah... Blah Blah Blah

only be using those free drinks vouchers at the after-show party in an effort to weasel our way backstage and get an exclusive scoop for you. Well, if you insist, just one more pint...

From the editorial to the inaugural issue of *Blah Blah Blah*, produced by the company behind the *American music magazine* *Ray Gun*, in association with MTV.

Church signs

● Don't let worry kill you — let the church help.
● Thursday night — potluck supper. Prayer and meditation to follow.
● For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
● This afternoon there will be a meeting in the south and north ends of the church. Children will be baptised at both ends.
● Wednesday, the Ladies Literary Society will meet. Mrs Jones will sing *Fut Mio In My Little Bed* accompanied by the pastor.
● Thursday at 5.00pm there will be a meeting of the Little

Letters

Andrew Roth writes: Claude Bourdet (obituary, March 25) was one of the effervescent spirits of the French left. I got to appreciate him as the London correspondent of *France-Observateur* in the 1960s. Regular telephone contact was refreshed personally every year, especially in the early 1980s, by his visits to Labour conferences usually as a guest speaker at Tribune meetings. His excellent English and bubbling sense of the ridiculous made him very popular.

He got on very well with Michael Foot, Aneurin Bevan and Jennie Lee, but could be touchingly trusting about comrades' promises. He once told me with pride that he had persuaded Bevan to write an article for him. I warned him not to count on it, because Nye was tied to a rival French weekly which paid considerably better, but Claude announced the article.

A few days later he called in a panic. The article had not arrived and he could not raise Nye or Jennie. Would I try? Knowing Jennie's hatred of journalists, I reluctantly agreed. When I got hold of Jennie, she barked something down the telephone. The article never arrived. This did not stop Claude from inviting to speak at the Tribune meeting. At the preceding dinner, Jennie evidently learnt over to him and urged, "Will you please stop Andy Roth harassing us?"

Andy Roth, who could turn a grinning cheek to that sort of treatment deserves a special place in a journalists' heaven.

Another day
March 26, 1940: Had to leave to go to Sadler's Wells with Rowena. During the interval we had cocoa and Welsh rarebit at the Angel. I was not in the mood to hear her "uncle", and how nice sex is. She says it's the best indoor recreation she has yet discovered, particularly in the afternoon which is the only time he can get away from his wife. She says it's like an old French song which just goes on and on, and I really ought to try it. I asked her what she did to prevent herself getting pregnant, and she said there are things called Volpar Gels which are quite effective, but the best thing is to go to the Marie Stopes clinic and get a Dutch cap. I told her all about Gerhardt and Jo, and she said it sounded very boring and rather decadent. Of course I'm not decadent at all really. I only wish I was like an old French song which just goes on and on. *Heinemann, 1982.*

Birthdays

Alan Arkin, actor, 62; Graham Barlow, cricketer, 46; Pierre Boulez, conductor and composer, 71; James Caan, actor, 57; Carole Carr, singer, 68; Kyung-wha Chung, concert pianist, 48; Professor de Buci in the Latin Quarter of Paris. The content is that of observing, remembering, reflecting. The garcon in the *Café de Buci* offers a correction: she wants "un jus de tomate" not "une tomate" as she has ordered. "Tomate" is Fernand with germinade. He recalls, at Nîmes, in the *Café des Sports*, you never asked the garcon to wipe your table with his "serviette". You asked for "un petit coup de casimir".

In Memoriam

DOUGLAS Johnson, who freed himself in the gym on March 28th 1992. Loved, missed and remembered by his family. To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4967. Fax 0171 713 4126.

Mothers Club. All wishing to become little mothers, please see the minister in his study.

● This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

● Next Sunday, a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the new carpet will come forward and get a piece of paper.

● The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the church basement Friday.

Dan Glaister

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Finance Guardian

Bulmer pays £23m to add cider strength

BULMER, Britain's biggest cider group, yesterday toasted its decision to splash out and add brands such as Stonehouse and White Lightning to its portfolio of top-selling Strongbow and Scrumpy Jack, writes Lisa Buckingham.

John Rudgard, Bulmer's chief executive (right) and finance director, Alan Flockhart, said the company was paying the premium to buy Inch's privately-owned, Devon-based cider company, thought to be the country's third biggest cider producer with 7 per cent of the market.

Mr Rudgard said the deal would increase the company's presence in the market's fast-growing cash and carry and take home sectors.

White Lightning will also add to Bulmer's presence in the "white cider", the fastest growing segment of the market. Inch's sold eight million gallons of cider in the year to last September, generating £25.6 million of turnover and £800,000 of profits.

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



Notebook Halifax is making a Clerical error

ESSPITE all the speculation to the contrary, it is the Halifax which has emerged from the crowd to secure an agreed deal to take control of the Clerical Medical. More than 40 different financial institutions expressed an interest in Clerical since it effectively put itself on the market in May 1995, when it asked merchant bankers Schroders to look at its options. The choice of the Halifax as the favoured buyer is something of a surprise in that so much attention has been focused on NatWest, which already has joint interest with Clerical Medical in NatWest Life — a deal which will not doubt be unpicked in due course.

Certainly, this looks like a good deal for Clerical Medical. Although the Halifax will become a public company within the next year, for the moment it is a mutual sharing the same management culture as the Clerical. By all accounts, its bid was among the most generous, offering Clerical policyholders, the real owners of the business, the immediate benefit of £113 million in special dividends plus a further £180 million increase in ultimate value. Clerical Medical, which has been in search of new capital so it can sustain the growth of its business, had no important new competition. It can now offer its brands through the Halifax/Leeds branches as well as the Independent Financial Adviser outlets, which it traditionally has used.

But while all this is the best interests of Clerical Medical, will it be as rewarding for Halifax members? The joint statement from the Halifax and the Clerical says that "Halifax's market value upon its proposed flotation should be enhanced." Amid all the upbeat talk, highlighting the benefits to Clerical, that seems to be somewhat unconvincing. The history of new financial groups rushing into acquisition is not encouraging, as the TSB experience demonstrated. And there will be concern that the likely highest bidder, the Halifax may have paid too much.

There could also be some worry that the Halifax is dumping the recognised leader in the life market, Standard Life, for a lesser player.

Halifax/Leeds members, who voted for conversion before this deal, might question whether they would rather have had the extra cash at flotation, rather than the promise of higher future earnings from the Clerical Medical some time in the future. Members are being of a more democratic say in this deal despite all the undertakings of better governance.

Bedding down any merger, however well suited the part-

Beef respite

THE immediate financial market reaction to the Government's decision to toughen the British beef export ban, falling on the present body of members, and the benefits will be down the road when many smaller members/shareholders will have cashed in their chips.

Mercury's stroke

SECURICOR is one of those companies which has been considered rather unglamorous. However, following the disclosure that it is tendering its antiquated shares structure, Securicor deserves fresh attention.

Apart from gaining assurance from the Inland Revenue that a sale of its 40 per cent stake in Cellnet (jointly owned with BT) will not attract Capital Gains Tax, Securicor has added clarity to its businesses, making itself a far more appealing potential investment at a stroke.

New Securicor, as it will be known, should enjoy a market capitalisation of over £2 billion. That makes it a certainty for inclusion in the FTSE-100 during the next reshuffle, and assuming this week's Orange flotation goes well, the shares should have further to go as Cellnet's value becomes clearer.

In the meantime, it is intriguing that Mercury Asset Management — Securicor's biggest shareholder has already given the proposals its blessing. MAM, which is also second biggest shareholder in Securicor's sister company Security Services, moved recently to top up its stake in Securicor. This was a piece of timing which looks almost mystical in its accuracy and has already brought notable gains for the fund manager.

Labour strains over training

Richard Thomas and Larry Elliott

SENIOR Labour figures last night attacked the party's decision to back away from a compulsory training levy on business yesterday for the way it would increase the cost of tax breaks for individuals seeking to retrain as a poor substitute.

The Opposition's new blueprint for training, to be unveiled on Thursday, is based on the establishment of voluntary individual learning

Accounts and is being criticised internally for diluting what is seen as a key plank of Labour's economic policy.

"It's all very thin," said one Labour critic. "Training is supposed to be one of our flagship policies. But this doesn't add up to much."

Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown said yesterday that he wanted "nothing less than a transformation of skills training in Britain" in order to tackle growing job insecurity. A key element of this strategy was the tax break for self-funded training, but leading party figures said this would

do little or nothing to boost workforce skills.

The party's plans for ILAs are also under fire from its own MPs, because they fail to spell out the amount which is to be paid into the accounts, either by government or individuals.

Although there will be sanctions against firms which fail to reach certain skills standards — such as the Investors in People Initiative benchmark — these have been attacked internally for being too weak.

Experts also expressed scepticism over the details of

the Shadow Chancellor's initiative. Lorraine Deardon, at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said that all privately-funded vocational courses below post-graduate level had been free of tax since 1962.

"It is difficult to see what is new here," she said. Ms Deardon also said more details would be needed before assessing any expenditure implications. Private spending on training is currently estimated to be around £8 billion a year.

An aide to Mr Brown said that the scheme would be funded by the redirection of

funds from within the existing training budget, and that the intention was to expand eligibility for the tax break to different types of course.

The architects of the new policy were last night defending the plans. One insider said the framework would deliver the same benefits, in real terms, as the former proposals for a mandatory levy — around £300 million in today's money.

The Confederation of British Industry welcomed the proposals. A spokeswoman said: "We would certainly like to see tax relief extended,

for example to cover MBAs. Of course, employers have a responsibility to train employees, but individuals do too — and the Government certainly does. We support voluntary ILAs."

Mr Brown insisted his proposals would ameliorate the effects of fears over jobs losses.

"The feel-good factor will not return as long as there is a feel insecure factor. People in their fifties and even forties fear that if they lose their job it could be their last or that the next job will represent a downward slide."

Imro launches inquiry into Jardine firm

Ben Atkinson

REGULATORS are investigating a fund manager owned jointly by the Jardine Matheson trading empire and Robert Fleming, the investment bank.

Possible irregularities by employees are thought to include "front running", placing an order for securities ahead of a much larger purchase by a client in the hope of reaping the subsequent price rise.

Imro, the fund-management supervising the inquiry into Jardine Fleming Asset Management last month, and the Securities and Futures Commission in Hong Kong — where JFAM is incorporated — has been fully informed.

In an unconnected case, Jardine Fleming confirmed yesterday that four brokers working for its securities arm in Hong Kong were sacked last Friday for "rat" trading. This practice involves diverting profits from share movements to brokers' accounts, rather than to those of their clients, and is a widespread problem for Hong Kong broking houses.

The Imro inquiry is centred on London. Neither the regulator nor Robert Fleming would comment, although Fleming confirmed that an Imro inquiry was under way.

New Securicor eases Cellnet hold-up

Ian King

SECURICOR paved the way yesterday for the sale of its 40 per cent stake in Cellnet, Britain's second-biggest mobile phone network, with a long-awaited shake-up of its share structure.

Securicor, which has been criticised for its archaic voting structure, said it was merging its two classes of share to create one new class, which would include unification of the group's sister company, Security Services.

The new company emerging from the shake-up, New Securicor, will enjoy a mar-

Poultry prices up 12pc as BSE scare hits home

for by increased demand for lamb, pork, poultry and fish.

THE price of poultry shot up by 12 per cent over the weekend and is expected to rise by almost as much again as the BSE scare hits home.

The poultry industry, which held an emergency meeting in London yesterday to discuss its ability to absorb extra consumer demand, is expected to limit price increases to stave off accusations of profiteering which might lead to a flood of imports.

Neil Harrison, finance director of one of Britain's biggest poultry groups, Bernard Matthews, whose shares rose 9p to 122p, said the Norfolk-based company had not increased production. "We will consider the Government's situation," he added.

The meeting came as large UK food and dairy companies saw their share prices hit by mass selling amid worries of a slump in beef sales.

Dairy groups such as Unigate, down 50p to 407p, and Northern Foods, which shed 16p to 183p, came under particular pressure on fears that they might have to import milk to maintain doorstep and high street deliveries.

Michael Landy, analyst at Henderson Crossfield, said he would not be surprised if the BSE scare

Swebgas is shopped to Office of Fair Trading

Geoffrey Gibbs

SWEBGAS, the gas supply monopolist of South Western Electricity, has been reported to the Office of Fair Trading and the gas industry watchdog, Ofgas, following an investigation by trading standards officers into complaints about its doorstep selling.

The company is one of seven regional electricity distributors planning to enter the domestic gas business when the market is opened to competition in a pilot area covering Devon, Cornwall and Somerset at the end of April.

Steve Butterworth, Devon County Council's director of trading standards and consumer protection, said the authorities had received 152 complaints from consumers in the region, covering areas such as high pressure selling techniques and failure to give notice of cancellation rights.

He said his department's report had been sent to the Director General of Fair Trading, with a copy to the Director General of Gas Supply.

Swebgas, which abandoned unsolicited door-to-door sales three weeks ago when the scale of the problem became apparent, said it believed the action it had already taken would address any concerns the OFT might have.

East Midlands Electricity said it would be cutting electricity prices for 2 million domestic customers and for businesses by an average of 2.7 per cent from April.

Dairy group shares feel knock-on effect of switch from beef — but others benefit.

Lisa Buckingham and Ian King report

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London brokers help set up rival to Telecom Eirann

Paul Murphy

THE Cruise O'Brien family knows a bit about telephones. A particularly colourful patch in the career of father Conor was in the mid-1970s as Ireland's Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. Now his son Patrick, aged 27, is setting up the first comprehensive competitor to the state-owned Telecom Eirann.

Stockbrokers in London, who are floating the venture on the fledgling Alternative Investment Market, have dubbed it Murphy.

Ireland has been slow to deregulate its telephone business. The European Commission has given the country

Love is . . . working for a hated utility, say bosses

Martin Haisall, Northern Industrial Correspondent

EXECUTIVES aiming for some ego-inflating adoration from their workforces would do well to steer their careers in the direction of some of Britain's most hated companies such as the privatised utilities, according to a "love in the workplace" survey published today. Those stolidly prepared for decades of employee loathing will battle on in the retail or travel and transport industries, a self-assessment survey of bosses in 290 companies, employing more than 250,000 people, discovered.

Overall, bosses in the utilities and government departments felt most loved, with 88 per cent perceiving their workers as "liked" and 77 per cent coyly admitting to being "adored". The survey admitted did not cover the views of utility shareholders.

In retail, and travel and transport only 37 and 51 per cent respectively felt "loved". The balance felt some staff nursed dislike or hatred.

Observers were yesterday at a loss to suggest why the most loved bosses worked for the most hated companies. One theory suggested perceptions of public enmity called employees into mutual affection. Bosses were asked to grade their employees' devotion from "hatred" to "adoration". Their perceptions were set against measures of practical affection like morning greetings, sympathy for personal problems and "looking cheerful when the boss entered the room".

The survey by the Link up Group found bosses felt "miserable and unloved" at work, experiencing increasing isolation with greater seniority.

Kipper Williams



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TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

| | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Australia 1.92 | France 7.47 | Italy 2.340 | Singapore 2.12 |
| Austria 15.25 | Germany 2.150 | Malta 0.525 | South Africa 5.8 |
| Belgium 45.00 | Greece 363.00 | Netherlands 2.465 | Spain 183.50 |
| Canada 2.225 | Hong Kong 11.83 | New Zealand 2.19 | Sweden 10.00 |
| Cyprus 0.70 | India 53.07 | Norway 9.58 | Switzerland 1.76 |
| Denmark 8.47 | Ireland 0.955 | Portugal 227.00 | Turkey 99.900 |
| Finland 8.69 | Israel 4.73 | Saudi Arabia 5.68 | USA 1.4850 |

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Walther:
'The best
— and
clearly
preferred
— bidder
was the
Halifax'



Life style... Clerical Medical boss Robert Walther (left) seals the deal with Halifax chief executive Michael Blackburn
PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK MARTIN

Clerical goes to Halifax

Now the spotlight is turned on NatWest, also shopping for a life insurer, reports **Pauline Springett** while **Jill Papworth** looks at who gains from yesterday's deal

THE shake-up in the UK life and pensions industry was given fresh impetus yesterday when the Halifax Building Society said it had agreed to buy life insurer Clerical Medical for £800 million.

The move immediately focused attention on National Westminster Bank, which is believed to have been thwarted in its bid to purchase Clerical Medical by the higher price offered by Halifax.

City sources suggest that

NatWest was poised to make an imminent bid for another life company. A spokesman for the bank declined to comment. "We have been linked with 23 companies in the past few months and on every occasion our policy is not to comment on any of them," he said.

Last month NatWest agreed to buy fund manager Gartmore for £472 million and it is perceived to be keen to make a further acquisition.

It is cash rich thanks to the £2.8 billion raised recently by the sale of its US-based retail

banking chain Bancorp. The purchase of a life company would boost NatWest Life but analysts have also suggested the bank could resort to a share buy-back.

The Clerical Medical/Halifax link-up should be completed by the year end. But it must first be approved by 75 per cent of Clerical Medical members who vote at an extraordinary general meeting in June, as well as by the High Court in October.

The £800 million purchase price will be paid in cash. Most of this will be added to Clerical Medical's with-profit fund, with £70 million injected as shareholders capital.

The deal will allow Halifax access to Clerical Medical's independent financial advisory network — the distribution area in which Halifax has a noticeable gap. It will

also give Clerical Medical financial security by underpinning it with the capital base of the UK's largest building society.

Robert Walther, chief executive of Clerical Medical, said the group had started to review its future in May last year. It had concluded that it would be unable to meet the expected sales boom in the life industry unless it had access to more capital. He warned that, without a buyer, it would probably have been forced eventually to cease taking on new business.

"By moving early we have found the best parent with the Halifax," he said. Mr Walther said Clerical Medical had evaluated 40 possible buyers and had held detailed negotiations with a few. "The best and clearly the preferred was the Halifax."

Mr Walther indicated that Halifax had offered more money than its rivals but he also pointed out that the deal was attractive because it contained little overlap between the two businesses.

Clerical Medical said its 7.5 per cent stake in NatWest Life — a relationship which is due to expire in 1996 anyway — would be unaffected by the Halifax deal.

Apart from NatWest there are believed to have been around three rival bidders — a foreign group, a composite insurer and a life company. The unsuccessful bids are understood to have been in the region of £600 million to £700 million.

Analysts are expecting a flurry of takeovers in the life industry. Scottish Amicable, Norwich Union, Friends Provident and Scottish Wid-

ows are among the takeover targets, with Abbey National, Woolwich, National Westminster and Prudential among the predators.

Last year Halifax Building Society merged with Leeds Permanent Building Society. Halifax said the Clerical Medical purchase should enhance its savings and markets value. It goes for a flotation next year.

The Principality Building Society, which is based in Wales, yesterday announced a cut in its standard variable mortgage interest rate from 2.9 per cent to 2.6 per cent on 1 April for new and existing borrowers.

The society, which is planning to maintain its savings rates, said the move was designed to emphasize its desire to remain a mutual organisation.

Lang supports share perks for nuclear chiefs

Chris Harris

THE Government is prepared to back a share option package for nuclear industry executives and senior managers as part of its plans to privatise the industry this summer.

Speaking yesterday at the official opening of the industry's newest station, the pressurised water reactor Sizewell B in Suffolk, the Trade and Industry Secretary, Ian Lang, said that he supported the use of share options as a means of widening share ownership.

Mr Lang's defence of executive perks comes as MPs prepare to debate nuclear privatisation today.

His remarks follow the stance taken three weeks ago when John Robb, chairman of British Energy, publicly backed executive share options as a way of motivating staff, despite controversy over "fat cat" salaries in the privatised regional electricity and water companies.

British Energy was the name given to the company formed to take the newer reactors into the private sector in July.

Accompanied by the Environment Secretary, John Gummer, Mr Lang braved anti-nuclear protesters with placards ("The Meek Shall inherit the Nuclear Waste") at the Suffolk station to declare it officially open eight years after construction started.

Seeking to reassure investors about the safety of nuclear power in private hands, Mr Lang promised that regulatory bodies were close to finishing their scrutiny of the new management structure established ahead of privatisation.

He said "all the necessary licences and consents are expected to be in place for the vesting of the new companies in less than a week's time".

Negotiations were continuing over the capital structure of British Energy.

With BE's vesting day due in five days, the industry secretary said he was confident that talks would be concluded despite the tight timetable. A trade sale was still an option.

The segregated fund to finance the costs of decommissioning BE's atomic stations, seven advanced gas-cooled reactors and the PWR at Sizewell, will receive a dowry of £30 million from the company and annual contributions of £16 million for the first five years thereafter.

By contrast, analysts at BZW, which is advising the Government, had estimated contributions to be pegged at £22 million.

News in brief

Budgie hovers towards the stage

SLEEPY Kids, the cartoon character licensing group, is bringing Budgie the helicopter, to the stage. The character created by the Duchess of York will make its debut in the month in Budgie's Magic Adventure. The play has been licensed to Funtime Productions, which has bookings at more than 100 UK theatres.

Keeping up its royal links, Sleepy Kids is preparing to launch a range of leisure wear for the Prince's Trust. Chairman Martin Powell told shareholders at the group's annual meeting that trading was progressing well. — *Ian King*

Hodder profits tumble

HODDER Headline, which assaulted the Net Book Agreement by selling cut-price copies of John Le Carré through supermarkets, yesterday reported a £2.5 million drop in profits to £5.7 million.

The publisher, which gave advance warning of poor results for 1996, said there were encouraging signs since the collapse of the agreement. Like-for-like sales in January and February were 12 per cent higher. Shares rose 13p to 238p. — *Lisa Buckingham*

More look at houses

HOPES of a housing market recovery were expressed by the House Builders' Federation yesterday. An independent survey of 387 house builders found that 44 per cent had more visitors to their sites last month than in February 1996 and 45 per cent had more reservations.

But Tay Homes said 1996 was the worst in the trade for 30 years and the six months to December 31 ended with profits down from £2.05 million to £20,000. Travis Perkins, the building materials group, saw profits ease 5 per cent to £38.5 million in 1996, but hopes for improved trading conditions this year. — *Tony May*

Ionica launch stalled

IONICA has been forced to postpone today's launch of its challenge to BT's virtual monopoly of local phone networks with an innovative radio telephone service. The Cambridge company insisted that its digital technology was working properly, but said a meeting of the main operating divisions yesterday decided that "a few more weeks" of preparation was needed.

Chief executive Nigel Playford denied the delay had been sparked by last week's call by Ofcom, industry regulator, for substantial reductions in phone charges over the next five years. — *Simon Davis*

\$1bn BCCI cash 'in US'

Liquidators of Bank of Credit and Commerce International believe they may be able to recover up to another \$1 billion (£67.9 million) in the United States to help repay creditors, a London court heard yesterday. Michael Crystal, counsel for Deloitte & Touche, is asking the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Richard Scott, to reject the claims of four sets of creditors to priority.

Mr Crystal said the liquidator had so far recovered \$34 million in the US, part of which will be put towards increasing the pool from which creditors will be paid a dividend, presently 30 per cent of their claims. The hearing continues. — *Reuter*

Thousand more jobs to go at Barclays

BARCLAYS Bank yesterday revealed plans to axe another 1,000 jobs — involving 350 managers and 650 clerical workers. The move is in addition to the 500 staff cuts announced by the bank earlier this month, writes **Pauline Springett**.

The jobs cuts come amid turmoil in the financial services sector which, due to takeovers and new technology, has shed 120,000 jobs in the past six years, 65,000 of them in banking.

The banking union Bifa and Barclays staff union Unifi reacted angrily to the announcement. Bifa said Barclays had already axed 21,000 jobs since 1991; the union warned that 10,000 more could go by the end of the decade.

"These are the people the bank and customers can ill afford to lose. We're talking of some of the most experienced managers and clerical staff left in Barclays. It's only the beginning of a whole new wave of job losses," said Bob Morgan, Bifa assistant secretary.

Unifi said the cuts had "shocked and devastated" the bank's workforce, while the remaining staff were working excessive hours.

Barclays spokeswoman said the bank had shed 18,500 jobs since 1991, and stressed that it was also creating jobs in new areas, such as telephone banking. She said the jobs would go via a voluntary early leavers scheme.

Inchcape is sharpening focus — and axe

OUTLOOK/ Distributor's dilemma will cost 2,000 jobs. Roger Cowe reports

INCHCAPE planned to focus on fewer, bigger businesses and to cut costs. That was in 1994. Yesterday, as profits all but disappeared under the weight of the latest restructuring charges, now chief executive Philip Cushing promised more of the same — focus and cost-cutting, that is, not falling profits.

Mr Cushing has been group managing director for the past year. He took over yesterday from Charles Mackay, who has briefly been elevated to the post of deputy chairman before leaving at the end of June. Mr Mackay has paid the price of three years' falling earnings and is part of the cost-cutting, although no doubt there will be a hefty price in ending his two-year, £300,000-a-year contract.

The new chairman, British Airways' Sir Colin Marshall, said: "There was a top-heavy position at senior management level and I have reached agreement with Mr Mackay to step down as chief executive."

More than 2,000 others will also pay the price as the

group seeks to "realign its cost base", although presumably with less substantial compensation.

Their misfortune arises in part from a specific, short-term problem in Inchcape's main business — car distribution — but a long-term difficulty also bedevils the group. That is its history as a collection of family interests with trading activities across Asia.

The latest bit of focusing, announced yesterday, was the intended disposal of the bulk of the services division. The insurance broker Bain Clarkson will be floated either on the stock market, or sold if a buyer can be found who will offer enough money. The testing services operation has also been put up for sale. Shipping will be the only remaining service area, and while Mr Cushing was at pains to stress its links with other group activities, that retention may have more to do with a lack of options.

Insurance and testing were the only businesses to increase profits last year, so this may smack of selling the

family silver. But Mr Cushing is confident that he can reverse the profit decline elsewhere, especially in the motor division.

This accounted for more than 54 billion of sales and almost half of the profits even after precipitous decline last year.

It incorporates retelling, through franchises such as Mann Egerton in the UK and international distribution, and has grown sharply with the advance of Japanese manufacturers into Europe. Inchcape is particularly closely aligned with Toyota. It has been the carmaker's UK distributor for almost 30 years, with the current agreement running until 2008.

THERRIN lies the problem. Japanese manufacturers have suffered as the strong yen has hit their competitiveness. Last year Inchcape's sales of Japanese cars were down by 8 per cent in Europe and 17 per cent elsewhere in the world. The struggle to maintain market share hit profit margins,

since the only way to sell cars was to give away money.

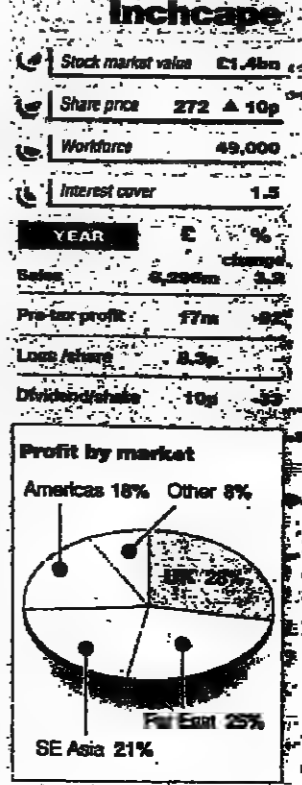
Now Mr Cushing has a four-point plan for profit recovery: weed out poor franchises, improve the network's efficiency, shorten the supply chain and sell financial services to car buyers.

But the problems are not just in Europe. Hong Kong car sales plummeted by a third last year, for example.

There is no knowing what impact the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong will have, but it is reasonable to assume that Japanese manufacturers will be able to bounce back, through new products and production in low-cost countries, such as the UK.

In the long term, however, Inchcape remains vulnerable because of its position as an intermediary, whether in importing cars or office equipment or bottling Coke. Distributors are always at the mercy of brand owners.

Inchcape's position straddling the east-west divide is a tremendous advantage, but may not offset the handicap of agency status.



HOW CAN AN ORANGE USER SAVE MONEY? BY SUBSCRIBING TO CELLNET.

15

minutes maximum for
£17.63 on talk 15"
orange

32

MINUTES MAXIMUM FOR
£17.50 ON OCCASIONAL CALLER*
CELLNET

RING 0800 21 4000 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

THE NET THAT SETS YOU FREE.

*Based on equivalent recommended tariffs. 12 mins max of off-peak calls. Minimum charge applies when peak-time calls are made. Telecom Securities Cellular Radio

Cricket

David Foot and Mike Selvey on the likeliest man to succeed Ray Illingworth as England's team manager today

Lord's may bank on Lloyd

RAY Illingworth's often uneasy reign as manager of England's Test team will officially end today when members of the Test and County Cricket Board executive committee meet, in effect, to agonise over the name of his successor.

David Lloyd, 49, is the strong favourite. He has worked closely and productively as Lancashire's ebullient coach with the England captain Mike Atherton. He has a natural gift for down-to-earth psychology and humour and gets on well with players.

His main rival is John Embury, 43, but he has recently signed a four-year contract with Northamptonshire and the complications over parting company with a new county would be greater.

Illingworth, ready to shed his duties as manager, is in London today to attend an official luncheon. He does not intend to make any public statement, though he will continue as the chairman of selectors until the autumn.

There remains an element of uncertainty about developments at the meeting. Every effort will be made to avoid an embarrassing and inconclusive outcome. Yet, significantly, it is likely that the TCCB will make no more than a brief, probably non-committal, statement about the new appointment.

Most meetings involving the combined brain power of the counties, however,

there will be enough hot air to send Richard Branson's balloon into orbit.

After the Caribbean tour of early 1994 Illingworth was appointed chairman of selectors and followed it up by becoming manager of the England team in March 1995 — an unprecedented free hand which was seen by the counties as the panacea for all ills.

The trouble was that, when he took the team manager's post, there was no dual-job description. Instead of defining the job and then seeking somebody to fill it, the counties decided Illingworth was the man to be employed. In effect he was allowed to write his own ticket.

Having created the monster, the TCCB has had to watch it running out of control, and with a fireproof jacket at that. Illingworth had always said that his last tour would be to South Africa this

past winter; as such his dual-job could not continue beyond this summer and he intimated his wish to stand down from the team manager's duties at the weekend, after the attempt to replace him as chairman of selectors with David Graveney ended in farce on Friday.

The abortive move, however, involved a reversion to the old system of a chairman of selectors and a chief-coach-cum-manager; as such, Illingworth seems to have taken the message on board.

If that is the system the TCCB wants — and it works in Australia, South Africa and has done so in the Caribbean — then Lloyd or Embury would take charge of team affairs while Illingworth will have to do the job of an arbitrator and co-ordinator. Presumably the captain will also be allowed a greater input again.

What is more critical, however, is who gets the unenviable task of attempting to coach, bully and cajole the England team into the 21st century; as they appear only recently to have come to terms with the 20th century, it would seem to require not just a bowling machine but a time machine, too.

Lloyd and Embury are the only realistic candidates to do what Bob Woolmer has achieved for South Africa, for that matter. Bob Simpson for Australia.

Nobody seems prepared to entertain the idea that the best candidate might be a foreigner, a view that appears to have done neither South Africa nor Sri Lanka any harm. How much money, for example, would it take to bring Woolmer back? It should certainly be considered. Which is more than can be said for a cranky addendum to the War-



Illingworth... unscathed

wickshire/Graveney plan: employ Ian Botham as a motivator. Was this dream the result of somebody eating cheese before bedtime? If the pipes need fixing, you do not ring an electrician.

For all the scorn heaped upon Illingworth in recent months, he remains relatively unscathed. He retains the full support of Yorkshire — not only because he is one of their own but because the county would not know success these days if it stood up and played the theme tune from Emmerdale — and, it appears, the majority of the other counties. There are, however, some who still believe that he has done a good job.

Rugby League

Rebels look to Europe

Paul Fitzpatrick on the effects of Super League's rout in Australia

THE 311 players contracted to Rupert Murdoch's outlawed Super League were yesterday forbidden from setting up their own competition by the federal court and a number of them could seek refuge in the European Super League which opens in Paris on Friday.

Maurice Lindsay, chief executive of the Rugby Football League, said in Sydney that he had been "besieged" by requests from leading Australian players wanting to play in Europe.

The players, he said, were disillusioned by the court's ruling which not only stops them from setting up a rival competition to the Australian Rugby League but says they must return to their ARL clubs if they want to be paid.

Ken Cowley, chief executive of Super League and chairman of News Corporation, Super League's backers, said it would be in the players' best interests to heed the court's directive.

"I am publicly advising Super League contracted players that the best short-term plan for them is to support their clubs in the ARL," said Cowley.

The players of Auckland, Penrith and — with "great reluctance" — Canterbury were among the first to return. Others seem sure to follow, though there are still powerful pockets of resistance, notably at Brisbane and Canberra.

They have been among the fiercest critics of the ARL but it is perhaps no coincidence that they are also among the highest earners on the Murdoch payroll.

Lindsay said that among the players who had "besieged" him were Laurie Daley and Ricky Stuart of Canberra Raiders. They are two of the most accomplished players in the world at present and their presence in the European Super League would be a major attraction.

But how that would affect the cost of News Corporation's abortive attempt to establish Super League in New Zealand and Australia could run into hundreds of millions of pounds. The estimated investment so far is £85 million and, if they lose their court appeal, they may have to pay damages to the ARL of well over £100 million.

In addition News Corporation are due to spend \$87 million in the European Super League over the next five years. Even for a man of Murdoch's fortune, that is a large amount to more than lose change.

their legal standing back home would be yet another complication in a tangled business. Not surprisingly Lindsay was recommending caution.

"I have advised the players to reflect on their position," he said, "and accept the advice of Mr Cowley. Unpleasant as it might be for them, they must try to protect their clubs in what is a really difficult situation for everyone."

Lindsay said that the "rebels" were disappointed and resentful that they were being forced to play in the ARL or risk living without salaries.

"Obviously they feel they cannot start their own competition if it means they are to be financially penalised by being forced to give up lucrative contracts.

"I do not actually prevent them from organising their own league but clearly made it difficult for them by determining, if they did, they would not get paid."

The absence of the 311 had a calamitous effect on last weekend's Australian programme with six of the scheduled 10 fixtures failing to start. Some of the games that did go ahead provided mismatches.

It could be better this week. "We want the players to play football and we just hope they show consideration to their clubs and to the fans out there that want to see them on the field. That's got to be the priority," said John Quayle, the ARL's chief executive.

Quayle said that the ARL would not set any deadlines for the players to return but was hopeful they would be available at the weekend.

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Rugby Union

Twickenham and clubs split over contracts

Robert Armstrong

THE doomsday scenario of a breakaway by England's leading clubs remains after another round of inconclusive talks with the Rugby Football Union and the Rugby Football Union's East India Club yesterday.

A disturbing lack of progress on the key questions of players' contracts, next season's competitive structure, and television income has prompted private accusations of stalling and brinkmanship by negotiators on both sides though publicly all concerned are maintaining a stiff silence.

Confusion reigns over already been discussed informally by members of England First Division Clubs Limited, the company set up to develop the professional aspirations of the top 10 clubs. Instead of a Courage League One next season there could be a Sanyo or Sony First Division controlled independently by EFDC directors accountable to shareholders rather than the RFU.

Japanese sponsors and investors are said to be monitoring the situation with intense interest. The entry of the English clubs into the European (Heineken) Cup for the first time next autumn has also prompted demands from the EFDC for the right to negotiate a new enhanced contract with BSkyB.

The clubs are, of course, aware that the RFU is party to a three-year contract, which has two years to run, but which does not give them the Nations Cup Rugby Limited. But such is their need for fresh income to sign up and pay the players that they are unlikely to back down on that demand.

Even so, it is the battle over players' contracts that will ultimately determine who controls English rugby. EFDC is determined that the players will be contracted solely to the clubs and released, on a tight rein only, for international matches and not squad weekends.

Dark hints by the clubs that they could organise their own Five Nations Championship can be discounted. The television contract between the home unions and the BBC, which covers the championship, still has a year to run and could be enforced by a High Court injunction.

No player with an ounce of wit is likely to sign a contract with his club or the RFU until it is absolutely clear where the money to pay him is coming from and which clubs will get the lion's share of TV income. As Ian Smith, the Gloucester and Scotland forward, put it: "The bubble could burst very quickly and leave a lot of people high and dry. I believe a limited amount of money will come into the game and a limited number of players will reap the benefit."

The strategic chasm between the RFU and the clubs has been highlighted by persistent demands from the North and London that the Divisional Championship should continue with new sponsorship next season.

Tony Hallett, the RFU secretary, may well regard himself, rather like the players, as another piggy-in-the-middle, answerable both to the RFU executive committee and to a lesser extent to powerful clubs such as Bath, Harlequin and Leicester.

The RFU, though, does hold an ace card in that it is ultimately responsible for the selection of the England team scheduled to play seven internationals next season. The leading players know that a rapprochement with Twickenham is central to their lucrative international futures.



Blowing hot... Michael Chang, the recent Champions Cup winner, competing in the Lipton Championships in Florida, where he is fourth seed. He beat Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman 6-3, 6-2 in the third round, his seventh successive singles victory

Wales wants dual Euro competition

David Plummer

THE Welsh Rugby Union will today urge the Five Nations Committee to agree to a two-tier "European" tournament for next season.

Following a two-hour meeting with its First Division clubs, the WRU and the 12-strong First Division limited agreed a tournament structure comprising 30-team European Cup, an equivalent of soccer's UEFA Cup for another 30 sides, an Anglo-Welsh competition involving all the 30-flight sides in both unions, a Welsh league played at home or away, and the Welsh Cup.

The average number of staves for each team could be 30 in a season reaching from the end of August to the end of May. The clubs want the change to start next season but the WRU believes that the Anglo-Welsh tournament will have to be delayed until 1997-8.

The contentious issue of who will control the competitions was not debated. The clubs have maintained that they should share all the proceeds from the competitions they are exclusively involved in and run them in conjunction with clubs from the other unions. Two working parties are being set up to look into fixture lists and the commercial side of the tournaments.

Pontypridd and Llanelli will meet in the semi-finals of the Wales Cup for the second successive year. Last night's draw matched Neath with Newport to the other match, with the games to be played back-to-back on neutral grounds on Saturday, April 13.

Barbarians pick Gallagher

Barbarians

THE BARBARIANS have opted for a blend of Italians, Frenchmen, Argentinians, New Zealanders and British forwards for their annual Easter Saturday clash at Cardiff on April 6.

The former All Black John Gallagher is at full-back.

and New Zealand; D Clark (Strathgordon and Scotland); G Colwell (Cambridge U); S Russell (Alumni BA and Argentina); P Vassallo (Cambridge and Italy); G Cheevers (Racing and France); A Pickett (San Marino and Argentina); A Watt (Glasgow HK and Scotland); M Williams (Strathgordon and Scotland); P Wright (Strathgordon and Scotland); M Gilchrist (Trento and Italy); S Milne (Glasgow and Scotland); K McDonald (Racing and France); J Gardner (Trento and Italy); I Morrison (Glasgow and Scotland).

Boxing

Tyson: I need more than \$30m a fight

Robin Gregg in Los Angeles

MIKE TYSON, who regained the WBC version of the world heavyweight title 10 days ago, is setting new standards for pay bargaining.

"I want more than \$30 million," said the fighter who was paid that sum for stopping the holder Frank Bruno in the third round. "I don't think I'm getting what I deserve."

In the seven months since Tyson was released from prison for raping a beauty queen he has had three short fights and collected \$65 million, but this evidently is not enough.

"I'm very unhappy," he said. "I'm not being treated fairly. I've been screwed my whole career. I've not been getting justice and it's just not fair. What I have done for boxing, what I have brought to the sport, I deserve more. No one is able to draw like I draw."

Ice Hockey

Treble note within Steelers' range as they reach Wembley

Vic Batchelor

SHEFFIELD STEELERS, the league champions and B & H Cup winners, remained on course to complete a clean sweep of this season's three major domestic trophies by reaching the final stages of the British Championship at Wembley this weekend.

Steelers, the defending championship holders, took top place in Group A of the play-offs by beating Basingstoke Bison 7-3 at home on Sunday, although they had to wait until the final period before clinching a place in this

second between Nottingham and Durham is at 6pm — would be a "big bonus. Whoever wins that game has a big advantage in Sunday's final".

Assuming they beat Humberston, Neil hopes Steelers will face Nottingham Panthers in the final. "I'd prefer Nottingham to win because they don't have so many players as Durham and they'll use up a lot of energy on Saturday night," said Neil.

Doubtless the Humberston Hawks, who ended Durham's 100 per cent play-off record by beating them 6-4 in Hull on Saturday, will be interested in Neil's assumption of semi-

final success against them. They came from behind to win that game, having trailed 4-2 going into the final period. Two goals from Graham Garden and one apiece by Derek Laxdal and Barclay Pearce secured their first Wembley visit since 1993.

The Hawks' success comes at a time when the team's future is in grave doubt as they are owned by Humberston County Council, which ceases to exist at midnight next Sunday. "It would be great to go out with a bang at Wembley," said their captain Mike Bishop. "The city deserves it."

Golf

Ballesteros tries hand-made cure

David Davies in Porto Védice

SEVERIANO Ballesteros will this week attempt to resuscitate his flagging career with a set of custom-made clubs and a \$1 million incentive deal. The clubs are made by Cobra, the company founded by the former Australian Amateur champion Tom Crow and recently sold to the American Brands giant for \$700 million.

Greg Norman, who owned part of Cobra and uses their clubs, took \$80 million as part of the deal. "If he plays nearly as well as he has in the past, he'll make a million dollars a year," said Crow, as he watched Ballesteros play a practice round for the Players Championship at the Tournament Players Club near Jacksonville in Florida.

"I have tremendous faith that he'll be a winner again. He's gone through 12 to 18 months when he hasn't played to his standards but I think he's just too good to fade away. That's why we signed him, because we believe in quality players."

"Let's face it, if you wanted to point to the two most charismatic players in the world you'd have to say Greg in America and Seve in Europe."

The wooing of Ballesteros began last year at the US PGA in Los Angeles, where Cobra is based. "He came to our factory for an hour and stayed for five," said Crow.

"He was just so fascinated. He wanted to see even more, so we sent our head grinder, Jaime Ramos, to Santander where he found a metal machining factory and they worked together on the exact specification he wanted."

Now, eight months later, the clubs are ready. All Ballesteros has to do is play.

Swimming

Pickering to duck British Olympic training camp

KAREN PICKERING is to skip the British Olympic squad training camp at Tallahassee in Florida on April 29 to May 14 even though the chief coach Bill Furniss has said all selected swimmers would be expected to attend.

Pickering, named yesterday in the 36-strong squad for Atlanta, has made clear in the past her dislike of training camps, especially when her coach Dave Champion is not present.

The surprise in the squad is Janine Belton, 16. Belton, fifth in the 300m freestyle final at the trials in Sheffield, will swim the heats of the 4 x 200m ft, as expected, Sarah Hardcastle is in the final of the 300m freestyle on the same day.

GREAT BRITAIN: Men: 50m freestyle: M Foster (City of Cardiff), 100m freestyle: W Stubbins (Tallahassee), 200m freestyle: P Palmer (City of Lincoln), 400m freestyle: Palmer (Stockport Metro), 800m freestyle: M Wilson (Harrogate), 1500m freestyle: A Ruckwood (City of Birmingham), 2000m freestyle: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m freestyle: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m freestyle: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m freestyle: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m freestyle: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 2000m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 3000m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 4000m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 5000m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 8000m butterfly: M Hannon (Stockport Metro), 1500m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m backstroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m breaststroke: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m individual medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m mixed medley: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 1500m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 2000m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 3000m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 4000m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 5000m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur), 8000m mixed relay: R Mangan (Rochdale Amateur).



LACOSTE



Dodds gives Saints a lift

BARBARIANS: J Gallagher

Sports Guardian

MODAHL VERDICT LEAVES IAAF FURIOUS WITH TESTING LABORATORY

Stephen Bierley in Cape Town on the embarrassing reversal for athletics only four months before the Olympic Games

Drugs policy left in chaos

FOUR months before the Olympic Games the procedures for drug testing were thrown into doubt by the International Amateur Athletic Federation's decision yesterday to drop the Diane Modahl case.

The IAAF was clearly furious with the incompetence of the Lisbon laboratory which allowed Modahl's urine sample to degenerate — the basis of her defence — thus leading to serious doubts over the high level of testosterone in the sample.

"In the past we have blindly followed what we have received. The lesson is this should not be automatically followed. There must be some sort of triple check," said Istvan Gyulai, the secretary general of the IAAF.

This seems to imply that the IAAF may demand a far more hands-on approach to testing, with perhaps a third sample being analysed by their own independent experts.

Modahl, cleared on appeal by the British Athletic Federation last July, finally heard the other decision she must wait for from where it was taken. When the IAAF delivered its news in South Africa, Modahl was at a training camp in Albuquerque. She expressed her bitterness at the authorities who have opposed her. "I have fought for this for just over 20 months," she said. "Now both the IAAF and BAF have accepted my innocence."

Modahl's case was based on claims that the high levels of testosterone detected in her urine sample were created by overheated laboratory storage conditions and last week further scientific evidence was produced on her behalf by two experts.

Insisting this removed any doubts about her innocence, Modahl called on the IAAF "to do the right thing and drop the case".

Yesterday she said she must now "look to the future — first with my family, Vicente and Imani, who are my inspiration. I can also start to make plans and set some personal targets. I will continue my training in preparation for the coming season."

"However, I cannot forget the past. The powerful organisations in control of sport can make you or break you. I believe there were those who wanted to break me. But I also had powerful forces on my side."



Moment of joy... Diane Modahl and her husband Vicente, who were finally vindicated yesterday after a 19-month battle. PHOTOGRAPH: KIPPA MATTHEWS

"We have gone the distance in this battle. There is no more in the coffers but we have finally won. We have lost an awful lot on the back of this. We will ultimately lose our house because of this."

"It has been a costly fight — and not just in financial terms. The mental strain it has placed on myself, my husband and our friends has been enormous. I am very angry that it happened in the first place."

The IAAF described it as "the end of a long story" although clearly it is not, at least as far as the BAF is concerned.

The Modahls are currently suing the federation for £450,000, comprising legal costs and loss of earnings, with the BAF stating its intention of "defending the case rigorously".

The 27-member IAAF council discussed the case for two hours yesterday and on the recommendation of its doping commission chairman, Professor Arne Ljungqvist, it decided not to forward the case to an arbitration panel. In other words, it believed there was no case to answer.

Modahl was banned for four years by a BAF disciplinary hearing six months after

testing positive at a meeting in Lisbon in the summer of 1994.

Although she was later cleared by an appeals panel after it accepted that major scientific and legal irregularities had occurred in the testing procedure, the IAAF was not satisfied with the decision.

A recommendation was made that the matter should be forwarded to arbitration, subject to a thorough study of the scientific arguments and a further analysis of the remainder of the Modahl sample.

Three independent experts found that the Lisbon laboratory, which is accredited by the International Olympic Committee and is still open, "had not conducted the additional analysis necessary for clarifying doubts and that the

analytical data was not satisfactory".

The second condition — a third test — could not be carried out because "permission was refused for further analysis" by the laboratory. It seems likely that the IAAF will now recommend that the Lisbon laboratory lose its licence to test.

The council added that it believed a further analysis of the sample could have provided a final resolution of the matter but that "it was not possible to pursue this course and therefore a serious element of doubt existed."

"Obviously it cannot be proved this was a doping offence, so there is no case to answer," said Gyulai.

Asked whether the Modahls might have recourse to reparations from the IAAF, Gyulai said there was no official po-

sition on such matters. "The council listens to all requests and ideas. The Modahls should come to the council," he said, and suggested that they might be receptive to any requests. But whether these would be met is another matter.

He added that the BAF had acted impeccably within the rules but that he was aware of the controversy of the case, and the loss of money inflicted on the Modahls.

Gyulai admitted that the case would lead athletes to doubt the whole doping-testing process. "Maybe, in the long run, our decision here will give athletes assurance that a just decision can be reached in the end. I hope we are setting a precedent that the rest of the athletic world welcomes."

Le beau jeu comes off the canvas



Richard Williams

IDON'T know if Cézanne ever saw a football match but Nicolas de Stael certainly did. It was in 1962, at the Parc des Princes, a friendly between France and Sweden, and it inspired Cézanne's most brilliant disciple to the creation of a series of wonderfully evocative paintings. De Stael saw the game through eyes that had turned the beaches of the Var and the country roads of Brittany into shimmering blocks of colour.

Cézanne's most brilliant disciple? No doubt you could find an art critic to disagree. If you think people argue about football, you should hear them squabble about art. But you don't need much time with De Stael to see why he is Eric Cantona's favourite painter. There's a spontaneity and a generosity in his work that makes his suicide in 1985 seem mystifying. And, like Cézanne, De Stael could change the way you look at familiar things, even a football match.

French football is, after all, one of the decorative arts. We aren't in the habit of giving it much consideration beyond that assumption, despite Cantona's pivotal role in the recent history of our own game. David Ginola's blistering contribution to Newcastle's assault on the title only confirms the stereotype of something beautiful but evanescent. When we think of French football as a whole, if we think of it at all, we remember the glorious team led by Michel Platini in the mid-Eighties, the team of Giresse, Tigana, Amoros and Rocheteau, their bright promise betrayed in the 1982 World Cup semi-final by the worst refereeing decision of all time.

After that, not much, if you overlook the shaming of Olympique Marseille, whose European Cup win of 1993 was tainted by the subsequent bribery scandal.

YET here we are, approaching the semi-finals of the three European club championships, and what do we find? France with a club in each of the three competitions — a role once occupied by England, whose sole remaining representative was eliminated

last week, and more recently by Italy, which has only one left. And the temptation must be to look beyond coincidence to the emergence of some new factor, some shift in the balance of power.

In the European Cup, needing to beat Juventus to meet Ajax or Panathinaikos in the final, are Nantes — not a name to ring many bells with British fans but good enough to have beaten Spartak Moscow, conquerors of Blackburn Rovers, in the quarter-final. Seven times champions in a 50-year history, the club enjoys a marvellous reputation as a fountain of talent. This is the nursery that produced three current stars of the Italian league: Milan's Marcel Desailly, Juventus's Didier Deschamps and Sampdoria's Christian Karembeu, who are joined in the current French national selection by another Nantes old boy, Patrice Loko of Paris Saint-Germain, and by two members of the current squad, Nico Oudekerk and Jean-Michel Ferri.

PSG are France's representatives in the Cup Winners' Cup, having beaten Parma to reach the last four. PSG, too, have had several big stars in recent years, notably George Weah to AC Milan and Ginola to Newcastle. But the Parc des Princes is still the home of such considerable talents as Youri Djorkaeff, the current sensation of the national team, Rai, the Brazilian playmaker, and Loko.

THE third club, Bordeaux, created the greatest excitement by overcoming a two-goal deficit from the first leg to beat Milan and reach the semi-final of the UEFA Cup. Even in the knowledge that Italians care only about the European Cup, this was a terrific achievement — and a tribute to the leadership of their captain, a gifted little Basque with the most emphatic name in world football, Bixente Lizarazu. His team includes Christophe Dugarry and Zinedine Zidane, also important members of Aimé Jacquet's national squad.

Zidane, Djorkaeff and Loko are the men keeping Cantona, Ginola and Jean-Pierre Papin out of the side as *les Bleus* approach the European Championship with a confidence that must make them the best outside bet after the Czechs. And with the 1996 World Cup on the horizon, and a new national stadium going up in Saint-Denis, things are looking good for French football in general. It's a pity Nicolas De Stael isn't around to capture it but the players are painting the pictures now.

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The dogged back-room team who forced a positive result

Duncan Mackay

ONLY Diane Modahl stood in the dock accused of a doping offence but behind her a team of doctors, scientists and lawyers worked non-stop for 19 months under the direction of her husband Vicente to prove her innocence.

Malcolm Brown, Britain's official team doctor at major events like the Olympics and world championships, put his job on the line by continuing to support her. "The fact that someone who had that much to lose was prepared to stand by me gave me strength," said Modahl.

But it was Professor Simon Gaskell, from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, who came up with the evidence to clear her.

He first persuaded a British appeals panel that it was possible for bacteria in samples badly stored to create a positive test, as Mo-

dahl contended happened in Portugal. Then on the eve of the Cape Town meeting, he found the final piece in the jigsaw when he transformed one of Modahl's samples from innocent to guilty. Like many within the scientific community, Gaskell was outraged at what he saw as a miscarriage of justice.

Professor Paul Talalay, an expert on degradation, even travelled from America at his own expense to support Modahl at her appeal hearing, saying it was a moral issue and his conscience would not let him rest.

Finally there was the legal team led by Tony Morton-Hopner, a partner at the Firming of Wales's lawyers, Mishcom de Reya, and Edwin Glasgow QC. "Their professionalism, unselfish dedication, commitment and motivation, despite the difficulty of having to deal with uncooperative and less than frank organisations, was superb," said Modahl.

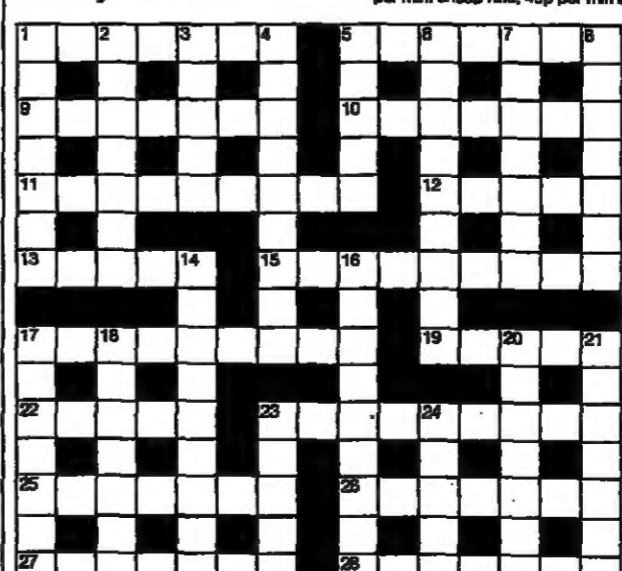
The First (assistant director) is a short, bearded, psychotic, Spaniard. He is the rudest man I have ever met (apparently this is normal for a First). He shouts, he screams, he gesticulates wildly.

G2 page 4

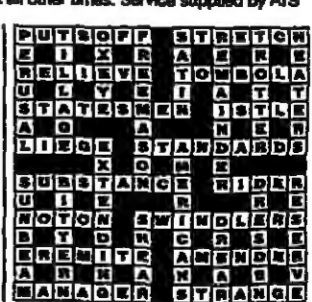
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- Across**
- 1 Wine, small drink to which some guys are attached (4-3)
 - 2 Two-seater wedding conveyance, going by air? (7)
 - 3 11-matched with a French peer (7)
 - 4 Boss well-versed in Morse, it turns out (7)
 - 5 Hayseed for a mountain-goat (4-5)
 - 6 A London court of noblemen (5)
 - 7 Speech sound in Tswana's language? (5)
 - 8 Wicked four in sea-trip (8)
 - 9 He found himself winning on the pools! (8)
 - 10 Letter to doctor for a lozenge (5)
 - 11 French writer reversing into tree (5)
 - 12 Hip-replacement recently? Hobby required! (9)



- Down**
- 1 Time enough, perhaps, to make about (7)
 - 2 Isle of Wight features almost unnecessary? (7)
 - 3 Best black lead (5)
 - 4 Driving course with game associations (4-5)
 - 5 Bristling, hard at work around hospital (5)
 - 6 Garrymede as holder of trophy? (3-6)
 - 7 So long a toast at Number 10? (7)
 - 8 Self-regarding sorts chewing stogies (7)

Solution tomorrow

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